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A DAUGHTER OF THE SOUTH



GEORGE · CARY · EGGLESTON



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"I MUST BEG FOOD, EVEN FROM AN ENEMY OF MY LAND AND
MY PEOPLE." (*See page 4.*)

A DAUGHTER OF THE SOUTH

A War's-End Romance

BY

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

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"THE MASTER OF WARLOCK," "EVELYN BYRD"

ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. POLLAK

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A DAUGHTER OF THE SOUTH.

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A Daughter of the South

I

ON THE BANK OF THE BAYOU

THERE was a good deal of danger involved in frying bacon there on the bank of the bayou, especially on so dark a night. The glare of the fire or the odor of the bacon, or both, might at any moment bring discovery on the part of the Federal or the Confederate scouts who ceaselessly prowled in that region.

Hugh Marvin perfectly knew what such discovery would mean in his case. The scouts in blue, should they find him there where he had no business to be, would very certainly hang him as a spy. The scouts who wore the gray, if they should come upon him there, would summarily riddle him with bullets as a person, not a soldier,

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trespassing upon a domain in which only soldiers had any conceivable business to be.

But Hugh Marvin was used to the taking of risks. He was a young man with an old man's habit of taking all things as they came and adapting his conduct to whatever circumstances might arise. He was cool of head, deliberate, determined. He had faith in his own ability to take care of himself, and that faith had never yet been disappointed.

For the rest, Hugh Marvin had no personal acquaintance with fear. Had he been a soldier, as he was not, he would have been always the first to volunteer for the work of desperate endeavor, and he would very certainly have won either a grave or a high position for himself by his reckless daring.

Just now his only purpose in life was to fry bacon. His corn-bread was maturing itself under the ashes of his fire, and he was bending over a skillet with all the devotion of a cook who is possessed of a conscience — a being rare on this earth, but still now and then existent. He had a fancy to have his bacon cooked that

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evening, — he had eaten it raw for a week past, — and so he had builded him a little fire there upon the bayou's bank, under the moss-hung branches of a low-spreading live-oak tree.

Outside the circle of the firelight there was inky darkness everywhere — a darkness intensified by the low-hanging clouds that were just beginning to leak in a fashion that forebode a downpour of the subtropical sort.

As Hugh Marvin was altogether alone, he naturally had no pickets out to warn him of approaching danger. His ears were his only sentries, just as his pistols were his only comrades.

Fortunately the light of his fire did not bring any enemy upon him, for the time at least. But the odor of his frying bacon spread itself through the canebrake woodlands, and penetrated there the nostrils of one who was agonizingly hungry.

As young Marvin sat there, intent upon his frying-pan, his alert ears suddenly detected a sound that did not belong to the woodland or the bayou or the canebrake.

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Instantly he sprang to his feet, brought both his six-shooters to full cock, and, stepping somewhat aside from the fire so as to reduce his conspicuousness as a target to its lowest terms, faced the approaching danger.

That danger took on a singularly unthreatening form. It approached hurriedly in the shape of a slender and very graceful young girl. Her large, dark eyes, which were deeply sunken, shone like signal-lights in the glare of the fire. Her form was lithe and her motions willowy. Her hair, a rich, dark brown mass, had broken from its fastenings, and now flowed over her shoulders and hung down almost to her knees.

Advancing quickly, she said eagerly but not hurriedly, in rich, Southern accents: "I am starving. I must beg food, even from an enemy of my land and my people. Give me to eat, I pray you."

For reply Hugh Marvin, after lowering the pistol hammers to half cock, dexterously picked crisp rashers from his frying-pan,

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daintily using his thumb and forefinger in lieu of the fork which he had not, and fed them to the famishing girl. Presently with his foot he kicked an ash-cake out of the embers, and gave the crumb of it to the wild creature who had thus come out of the darkness and the woodlands to crave food at his hands.

As he fed her famished lips he saw only these things:—

She was in a state of actual starvation;

She was beautiful after the far Southern type;

She was torn and bedraggled as to her clothes, and, finally,

Her hair had not been combed for days past.

So much of observation he made hurriedly. It was his habit to see quickly all that there might be to see—to take in at a glance what a less alert observer would have required a day or a week to see.

“You are still very hungry,” he said after the girl had swallowed the fourth rasher of bacon and its accompanying ash-cake, “but if you

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don't mind, I think you'd better not eat any more for a little while—just for a minute or two—to give your digestion a chance.”

“You are right, I suppose,” answered the girl, with that extreme deliberation of utterance which characterizes the speech of high-bred, Southern women,—“You are right, I suppose, and I will fast for a while, though I am very hungry. You are hungry, too, I doubt not, so you must eat your supper now. I'm sorry to have interrupted it.”

“Please think no more of that,” he gallantly answered. “I am satisfied in ministering to you.” After two minutes or so he placed the frying-pan and the ash-cake on a fallen tree trunk and said: “Now you shall sit down on the log and eat with me. Your digestive apparatus has had sufficient rest by this time, and you may eat all you want.”

“Thank you. You are very kind though you *are* a Yankee.”

“What constitutes a ‘Yankee’ in your mind, and upon what grounds do you assume that I am one?”

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"Oh, well, it's simple enough. Every healthy young Southern man has a uniform on. You have none, though you are—"

She hesitated to speak the thought that was in her mind. That thought was that he was about as perfect a specimen of stalwart young manhood as any that she had ever seen.

"Well, anyhow," she resumed after an interval, "you aren't a Southern soldier, so you must be a Yankee."

"But does that follow of necessity?" he asked in a mood to humor her and "draw her out." "Is everybody a Yankee who happens at this time not to wear a gray uniform?"

"Practically, yes. Anyhow you seem to be a gentleman, so you can't be a Southerner, for every Southern gentleman is in the army."

Hugh Marvin made no reply, whereat the girl wondered.

"Why don't you defend yourself?" she asked irritably, almost querulously.

"Against what?"

"Why, against my accusation that you are a Yankee."

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"It doesn't impress me as a serious accusation. I know many Yankees who are thoroughly good men. I fail to see why I should resent being called a Yankee."

"Only think what the Yankees have done and are doing in our Southland," she answered.

"Yes," he replied reflectively. "War is utterly brutal. But I don't think it is more devilish when waged by one people than when waged by another. For myself I have nothing to do with it."

"Have you never been a soldier, then?"

"Never. And in this war I never shall be."

"You see that the South is right?"

"No. I see that the South is utterly wrong."

"Then you think the North is right in invading our country and destroying our homes, and even setting the half-savage negroes upon us?"

"Not at all," he replied.

"But surely —"

"Please let me explain," he interrupted, "inasmuch as you are good enough to be interested in my personal views. I am satisfied, as I told you a moment ago, that the South is utterly

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wrong in this war. It ought never to have seceded. I am equally convinced that the North also is utterly wrong. It ought never to have made war upon the seceding states. So I have refused to become a soldier on either side. I have near friends in the Northern army and other near friends in the Southern. I cannot regard any of them as enemies. I am a Kentuckian, you know."

"I didn't know. I'm glad of it, because — well, because I rather like you. At least I like your voice, and I like the dainty way in which you picked the bacon out of the pan and put it into my mouth. You scarcely touched it, and you used only your thumb and finger. I like that, and better still I like the way in which you keep your little fingers extended, when you are handling things. I noticed it even when you were manipulating your revolvers."

"That seems to me a rather slender reason for liking or disliking a man."

"Oh, no, it isn't," she answered eagerly. "Everything of that kind is an indication of character. A man who extends his little fin-

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gers in that dainty way, and touches things with only the fingers that he must, would never be rude to a woman or ungentle to a child. It means that he is delicate in his feelings and at the same time has strength to spare. I hope you're not married."

"Thank you for your good-will. No. I am not married or even engaged."

"I am so glad," she answered, as any five-year-old child might.

"But why do you care for that?" he asked, full of curiosity, not so much concerning the particular matter in hand as concerning the girl herself, who seemed to him an extraordinary combination of the mature woman and the little child. "Why should you care whether I'm married or not?"

The girl flushed crimson in the firelight. Some subtle self-consciousness had come to her in response to his question. But she was easily mistress of herself, and so she answered as the flush faded out of her countenance:—

"I don't know that I can tell you why. Oh, yes, I can. It is because you're not in love

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with anybody, and it would be a very great pity for you to be married to a woman you didn't love."

"Oh, I don't know. A good many men marry women whom they respect and esteem without particularly loving them, and they manage to get a good deal of comfort out of life."

"Horrible!" she exclaimed. "Still, it is true enough. But those are cold-blooded men, and you are thoroughly warm blooded."

"Why do you think that?"

"Oh, for many reasons. You have pink spots on the palms of your hands, on the outer-side up near the wrists; your cheeks flush easily; you were quick in handling your pistols; and when you saw how hungry I was, you fed me quickly. Then, again, the way you are talking to me now means a world of warm-blooded kindness. You *know* I am on the verge of collapse; you know I am chattering nonsense just to hold myself together; yet you indulge the chatter, and encourage it. Oh, you're warm blooded."

"You're a sorceress, a diviner," he replied;

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"I ought to be afraid of you, but really I'm not."

"Of course you are not. You're not afraid of anything. Warm-blooded men never are afraid of anything. Now I'm going back to the bushes."

"No, you are not. It is beginning to rain again, and so I'm going to make a little bush-shelter for you here before the fire. When that is done, I'll go out into the bushes myself to sleep. You are chilled and weak; you must sleep by the fire."

He busied himself at once with the hurried construction of the bush-shelter with a cover of palmete leaves, while the girl sat upon a log watching him with a seeming fascination.

Marvin saw clearly what her condition was. She was overwrought, — worn out, well-nigh in collapse, — and she was resolutely trying to control herself. She had undergone a fearful experience of fright, grief, fatigue, exposure, and starvation. She had lived for days without food or sleep, under excessive strain, and it was only by moral force and the unyielding

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will of a high-bred woman that she was now able to save herself from breakdown. Her chin was one that betokened boundless strength of character, but it quivered now and then in spite of her will that it should not. Her lips were full, rich, and ripe, — the lips of a true daughter of the South, — but they were nearly livid now, and in speaking she controlled them with difficulty.

Hugh Marvin was tenderly considerate of her condition. He perfectly understood that in all she had said to him she had forced herself to speak lightly and queerly, as her only means of avoiding hysterical collapse, — that her words had been only such as she could for the moment call to mind, and that they had been spoken with little if any reference to their meaning.

He saw clearly that the case was one for the utmost tenderness of care, and the utmost discretion in giving such care. As he worked in constructing the shelter, he now and then saw, from the corner of his eyes, a gentle flow of tears down the maiden's cheeks, but he pre-

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tended not to see, in aid of her manifest disposition to conceal her weakness. For further relief he chattered ceaselessly, pretending to instruct her in the art of building a bush-shelter, and exercising the utmost care that there should be no lapse of the conversation into matters personal or emotional. His method was that of the skilled nurse who seeks to divert the patient's mind from emotional to commonplace thoughts.

As his work neared completion it was rudely interrupted. A twelve-pounder shell, fired from nearly three thousand yards away, alighted in the midst of his fire, and exploding, scattered the burning sticks in every direction, completely extinguishing the blaze. At the same moment minié balls, fired at long but still effective range, began viciously whizzing, buzzing, and zipping around the pair.

Instantly seizing the girl by the waist, the strong young man carried her bodily over the bank. Running down along the stream with the speed of a sprinter, he quickly carried her outside the zone of random fire, except that the

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wildly exploring cannon was now shelling the woods in every direction with that ineffectiveness which usually characterizes a waste of ammunition of that purposeless sort.

“Put me down on my feet,” commanded the girl, after a few moments. “I’m not an invalid or a child ; I can walk.”

“Be still !” the young man replied, “I am simply saving you.”

A moment later he deposited her in the stern of a dugout, — a hollow log canoe, — and, himself going to the bow, paddled away rapidly down the stream.

He felt rather than saw in the darkness that she had fainted. But he wisely gave no heed. He knew that her position, lying prostrate in the boat as she did, was the most favorable one possible for a fainting person. He knew, too, that the girl would recover presently, as well without any assistance from him as with it. So he obeyed the impulse of practical common sense and paddled swiftly and noiselessly down the stream and out of the zone of fire.

II

THE CEREMONY OF INTRODUCTION

IT was ten o'clock in the morning when Hugh Marvin, after a night of weary paddling, pushed his canoe through a fog well-nigh thick enough to be ladled with a spoon, and brought her alongside a little stern-wheel steamboat anchored midstream.

The men on board stood with rifles cocked, ready to repel his approach with a deadly volley, but fortunately the officer in charge of them recognized him in time and restrained the firing.

Once on board the steamboat, Marvin assumed command of everybody there.

"Send the chief engineer and the pilot to me instantly," he said to the man in charge of the rifle squad. "In the meanwhile let some of you men carry this young woman as

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gently as possible to the protected stateroom. She needs rest."

Then turning to the chief engineer, who had presented himself, Marvin asked:—

"Have you steam pressure?"

"Yes, a hundred and forty pounds. I can make it a hundred and sixty in ten minutes."

"We won't wait for that. But fire up as fast as you can. We'll need all the speed we can make after we round the bend." Then turning to the pilot he said:—

"Get under way quick. The Rebels are around here in strong force with several batteries. Run down the bayou at full speed and out into the river. It's only a chance that we get there at all."

It was so indeed. No sooner had the steam-boat passed beyond a certain protecting point than a merciless fire of twelve-pounder Napoleons and searching Enfield rifles was opened upon her from both banks of the sluggish waterway. The engines and boilers of the boat—her vitals as it were—were protected

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by thick bulkheads of timber that even a twelve-pound solid shot could not penetrate. The pilot, in his lofty eyrie, was shielded behind a triple-boiler iron barrier. The hull of the steamer was protected by a chain-laced timber raft which contributed to safety, while its resistance to the water greatly hindered speed.

Hugh Marvin had no protection at all as he stood there upon the hurricane-deck by the side of his first mate amid a shower of minié bullets, with now and then a bursting shell to emphasize the seriousness of the situation. He felt himself responsible for the safety of the cotton-laden steamer, and so he stood unflinchingly upon her exposed hurricane-deck in the midst of the cannon and musketry fire, in order that his commands might be promptly given and instantly obeyed.

Turning presently to call out a command to the pilot, he saw beside him the girl he had brought out of the bayou.

"What in the name of sanity are you doing here?" he asked. "I ordered you to a stateroom that is doubly protected with

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boiler iron and a tier of cotton bales. Go back to it at once !”

The girl made no answer and no movement as if to obey his command. She simply stood there in a shower of bullets, from which she did not flinch, with now and then a shell whose bursting produced no visible effect upon her nerves or her demeanor. She looked at him with wide-open but not understanding eyes. He saw that she was dazed and in a state of semi-unconsciousness.

“And no wonder !” he thought. “The girl has been starved for many days past and fearfully overwrought. She has had no food since I gave her the bacon and ash-cake last night. What an idiot I am !”

Then he called to one of his men, who came, crouching low by way of avoiding so much as he could of the fire.

“Escort this young woman to the protected stateroom, quick. Then tell the steward that he is to serve her a breakfast there in the fewest number of minutes possible. Be quick, and tell the steward to be quick. Tell him

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not to wait for frills, but to send up food and coffee at once!"

A little later the steamboat rounded a point beyond which there were no hostile forces near at hand, and so, except for a random shot now and then, the firing upon her ceased.

It was only necessary now for Hugh Marvin to direct the extinguishment of such fires as the shells had started among his cotton bales, and to seek a secure anchorage in the river he had at last reached.

Then he paid something like a formal call upon the girl, his captive. He found her sitting before the meal that had been served to her by the steward in obedience to his orders. She had tasted no morsel of the food, but sat staring at it like one in a dream.

"Why have you not eaten?" he asked. "Surely you are hungry?"

"Yes," she answered in her low, soft, deliberate, contralto tones, "yes, I am very hungry. But I'm not a pauper. I will not take food in charity, and I have no money with which to pay."

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“But heavens and earth! this is not charity,” he answered excitedly. “While you are on this steamboat, you are my guest. Surely your host may offer you food without affront.”

“That is true,” she said meditatively, and as if weighing the matter in her mind. Then, after a pause, she added:—

“No, that isn’t quite true. I’m not your invited guest. I came out of the canebrake and asked you for food. I made myself a beggar and shamed myself, and this is only the sequel to that.”

“And I,” he answered, “feel myself your debtor for your company at supper. It was a very great pleasure to me to minister to your need, not as a benefactor or a giver of alms, but as the host of a very welcome guest. But let us put that aside. All that relates to last night’s supper. You remember that when the firing began I took forcible possession of you and brought you here against your will. In brief, I made you a captive, my prisoner, and the captor must feed his prisoner, must he not?”

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The girl looked at him out of her deeply sunken eyes. Then she rose to her feet and said : —

“Yes, you are warm blooded. So am I. I will partake of your food, and I thank you.”

“I will eat with you, if you permit,” he answered, “for I, too, have had no breakfast.”

Then, calling to a boy, he sent an order to the steward for fresh supplies that should be hot, as those on the table had grown cold.

He saw clearly that the girl was still intensely excited and not quite mistress of herself, though her effort to control herself was obvious in every word and tone. So for a time he let her alone, asking no questions even of an indirect sort.

After the breakfast had begun to have its normally soothing effect, he said to her : —

“I am going away now for a time to give such orders as may be needed for the fleet of which I have command. When I return, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me how I am to address you. You see I don’t know your name.”

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“Pardon me,” she quickly answered, “that was an oversight. I am Gabrielle Latour.”

“And I,” he answered, “am Hugh Marvin.”

“Thank you,” she said, as if to bow him in queenly fashion out of her presence, and he took his departure, saying only : —

“I hope you may be able to get some sleep.”

And in aid of that hope he promptly ordered the steamboat to proceed five miles or so upstream to an anchorage in which she would be free from the disturbance of even occasional shells from Confederate cannon.

Meanwhile Gabrielle Latour slept, and grew less hollow-eyed.

III

MASTER AND MAN

THE fleet which Hugh Marvin commanded consisted of seven small stern-wheel steamboats of light draught. The business they were engaged in was that of buying and bringing out of the South such cotton as they could.

That period of the Civil War had come, when the struggle—in the West at least—had begun its lapse from patriotism to plunder, when greed had begun to take the place of glory in men's minds.

By the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, the Mississippi River, from its source to the sea, had been opened to navigation. But the country traversed by the great river was still a region of tumult and turmoil. It was certain that no more great armies would assemble there

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to try conclusions on broad strategic lines, but alert and vigorous bands of Confederates still ceaselessly haunted the swamps and smaller streams and the woodlands along their banks, and with mosquito-like persistence made the occupation of the country by their adversaries a difficult and perilous task.

Up and down the great river itself the merchant fleets as well as those of war might steam in comparative security, though even there they had to look out for themselves. But the creeks and bayous and tributary streams, whose navigation was necessary to the effective use of the river for purposes of commerce, were veritable hornets' nests still.

Even earlier than this the time had come when greedy speculators had begun to grow rich out of war operations, with so certain and so speedy a success that they actually feared and dreaded the end of a contest out of which they were making money easily and in enormous sums.

These men clearly foresaw the ultimate triumph of the Union arms, and brutishly

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dreaded it as an event that must interfere with their "business." They were men who cared not at all how many young lives might be put out by the continuance of the war, or how many homes at the North and at the South might fall into the shadow, or how great might be what in their commercial phrase they would perhaps have called the "output" of widows and orphans, if only the war could continue indefinitely to afford them opportunities of gain.

Ezra Brass — a man of this type — was one of the owners and promoters of the cotton-buying expedition of which Hugh Marvin was in command. So when Marvin sent for the captains of the six other steamers to come on board his own vessel and report on their cargoes, Ezra Brass came also. He was not one of the captains of the fleet, subject to Hugh Marvin's orders. On the contrary, as one of the half-dozen chief owners of that fleet, he deemed himself entitled to give orders on board any and all the seven little steamboats that constituted the squadron.

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Hugh Marvin declined to recognize his right in that respect. He had reasons of his own just now for not wanting to see the man. When he saw Ezra Brass approaching, he hurriedly arose to meet him.

"Go away!" he commanded. "Go away at once, and don't let me see you again till we land at Cairo."

"But I own this steamboat," began Brass, in surprised protest.

"No, you don't," answered the younger man, calmly, but with some touches of anger in his tone. "I own four-fifths of her myself, and the other fifth belongs to a personal friend of mine. I order you off."

Brass remembered that this statement of ownership was true. At the beginning of his cotton-buying operations down the river he had employed Marvin as "a young chap that don't mind the risks." The task set the youth was to go up the little streams and bayous secretly, in a canoe, and at momentary risk of his life. He was there to buy cotton at prices ranging from half

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a cent to ten cents a pound, according to the risk and difficulty of getting it out. The planters who sold the cotton were to pile it on the banks of the streams and bayous, and the speculators who bought it were to take the risk of capturing it there and getting it to market.

That risk was considerable, but the profit was enormous. The cotton thus bought for a trifle on the banks of bayous and little rivers was worth at the North in the year 1864 as much as a dollar and ninety-two cents a pound. A bale weighing five hundred pounds could be had on the banks of a bayou for from five to fifty dollars. It could be sold in New York at from seven hundred to nine hundred and fifty dollars.

Here all the dreams of avarice were made actualities, and avarice was prompt to seize the opportunity.

It was in aid of speculation of this sort that Ezra Brass had at first employed the young Kentuckian, Hugh Marvin. Ever since that time Hugh Marvin had served his employer

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with a fidelity that never shrank from hardship or flinched in face of danger. But he had many times revolted and refused to do Brass's bidding, because he saw dishonesty in the services demanded at his hands. "I will keep myself clean," he had said, "even if I must drown myself in the muddy river to do it."

And he had kept himself clean. He had little by little taught Brass to understand that the honest man must in some respects be the master of the dishonest man, even when the dishonest one is paymaster and the other is a salaried subordinate.

But Hugh Marvin had not been satisfied with refusing to do dishonest things for Ezra Brass. He had steadfastly insisted upon the dishonesty of the wages paid him. He had repeatedly compelled an increase until his earnings grew large, and as he was a man of inexpensive habits, he had accumulated a considerable wealth of his own.

Then he had assumed new relations. As Ezra Brass's enterprises had enlarged their scope so as to require a greater financial backing

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than his own, he had associated other capitalists with him, forming what would now be called a "syndicate." That word of originally evil import, which still covers much of sin, was not applied to reasonably honest business combinations until ten years after the time of Ezra Brass's cotton-buying operations. But the fact existed then as now, innocently or otherwise as the case might be.

When this latest expedition was in preparation, Hugh Marvin had put himself into it in a way which he had not attempted before. He had by that time accumulated considerable money, and a good deal more of that respect on the part of men of substance which is sometimes worth more than money. So he had made himself in effect owner of that one of the seven steamboats on which he personally sailed as the salaried commander of the entire expedition. The other six boats belonged to Ezra Brass and his personal associates — one-third interest, perhaps, being Brass's own, and the rest being subject, in one way or another, to his control.

MASTER AND MAN

As practically, though not actually, chief owner of the expedition, Brass had from the first assumed the right to direct its operations from some secure vantage-ground, for it was a "business principle" with him to avoid personal physical risks. "I can hire other fellows to get killed," he used to say, "a good deal cheaper than I can take bullet chances myself."

He had from the first assumed that he was himself master of this cotton-buying expedition and of all the steamboats composing it, though Hugh Marvin had an interest in all of them and was in command of all. He was a good deal nonplussed, therefore, when Hugh Marvin repudiated his authority and ordered him off the steamboat. But he obeyed the order.

IV

EZRA BRASS

EZRA BRASS was not a sensitive person. Throughout his life it had been his boast that he was "practical" above all things. He was so in fact. He had never in all his life sacrificed a cent to a sentiment. He had never shown reluctance to pocket an affront if he could pocket a dollar with it. He had never "quarrelled with his bread and butter," and just now he realized that the alert and capable services of Hugh Marvin meant a good deal of bread and butter to him, particularly as his partners in this enterprise were likely to support Marvin in a controversy.

He did not at all understand the young man. He had often wondered that "so smart a chap as Marvin should be fool enough to throw away his chances," as that young man had often done, by refusing to do dishonest things which promised gain with little or no risk.

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Nevertheless he realized that Marvin's services were of inestimable value to himself, and even that Marvin's integrity had sometimes served him well.

If the young man had brought to naught many of his most promising schemes of dishonest gain by refusing to engage in them, and now and then by threatening their exposure, on the other hand Hugh Marvin's absurdly sentimental integrity had stood Brass in good stead upon occasion.

"The young fool might have got away with a pot o' my money that time," he once said, "if he hadn't been so damned honest. And the same thing has happened a good many other times."

So Ezra Brass had accustomed himself not to take the occasional insolences and insults of his employee Hugh Marvin too seriously. It was his habit of mind to accept and overlook them as personal peculiarities which he could not at all understand, but with which he must reckon, in spite of himself.

In brief, Ezra Brass was a speculator to whose

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mind everything presented itself as a possible minister to his greed. It was said of him that the only reason he had never sold his wife and children was that nobody had ever offered him as much for them as they were worth to him. As for honor, conscience, or scruple of any kind, he had never possessed commodities of that sort to throw upon the market.

Ezra Brass had begun life on a farm in southern Indiana. He was a speculator even while at school. Marbles, jack-knives, red apples, and the like had been his merchandise then; but even at that early age he did not fail to understand the special value of actual money as a medium of exchange, and so whenever he made a trade of any kind, he exacted "fips" or "bits" as boot.

The money that could be made in that way, however, in a school in which the total amount of the circulating medium did not exceed a few dollars, was naturally not much. So Ezra Brass did not get his real start in life till he fell upon an opportunity to rob his father.

That happened when the boy was about

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twenty years of age. It was his father's practice every year to put all the produce of his farm on board a flatboat and float it to New Orleans for sale. One year the boy Ezra was allowed to go down the river as a "hand" on board the flatboat. The next year, his father's health being unsatisfactory, Ezra, as a bright and helpful young man, suggested that he knew the business well enough to manage the enterprise himself, and it was arranged that he should do so.

He took the flatboat to New Orleans in safety. He sold the boat and cargo with excellent discretion, and he took back with him memoranda showing that he had so shrewdly managed the business as to get a good deal better prices for the farm produce than his father had ever been able to secure.

But Ezra brought back no money with him. He reported that all had gone well with him until the evening before his arrival at home. On that evening he had boarded the "Mailboat" at Louisville, and feeling safe now, had left his belt, containing the eight hundred and

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odd dollars of net proceeds, in his stateroom. Somebody had entered the stateroom, he said, and had stolen the belt with its heavy load of Spanish coin.

For three days after Ezra told that story his father reflected upon it. Then, one morning early, the elder man called his son, and said to him: —

“Ezra, I reckon you’d better go off somewhere and set up for yourself; you can sell onions and hay and hams a good deal higher in New Orleans than ever I could, so it seems to me you’ll get on. But, with your habit of leavin’ money around loose, I’ve concluded you’re too expensive a luxury for a plain farmer like me to keep on hand, so you’d better go, Ezra. Me and the rest of the family will pull through somehow till we make another crop.”

So before attaining his majority, Ezra Brass left home to do for himself.

He rather regretted that he must leave his mother while buckwheat cakes were still in season, but he reflected that “there are higher things than buckwheat cakes to live for in an

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earnest world." He had purloined the substance of that phrase from a Methodist preacher whom he had talked with on a steamboat, and who had tried to "improve an opportunity" to win the youth from sordid views of life.

Otherwise Ezra Brass was entirely content to leave the paternal roof, with such small possessions as he had, including a coin-packed belt which he returned by night to dig up from the sand beneath a well-remembered sycamore tree down by the river.

From that time until the war broke out Ezra Brass managed to do fairly well for himself in speculation of one sort and another, so that when the war came, he had several thousand dollars employed in his business, and was reckoned a capitalist of some note in a region where a few thousands then meant far more than vastly larger sums mean now anywhere.

The war, however, brought to Ezra Brass his first adequate opportunity. There "wasn't much money in it," he used to relate, "till after things sort o' got a-goin' our way." For several years preceding the war he had "maintained

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business relations " with the South. That is to say he had been surreptitiously active in inducing negro slaves there to run away and cross the Ohio, where he became active in capturing them, and returning them to their masters in every case in which an adequate reward was offered. In his own picturesque phrase he "worked the underground railroad for a profit both ways."

When the war came, a prospect of much larger and less risky earning opened itself to this "practical man's" vision. As soon as contracts were advertised for, he began looking into the matter, and now and then he made a little profit of twenty or twenty-five per cent by supplying the army with one or another necessity.

But in that early stage of the war quartermasters and purchasing agents were reasonably honest. More annoying still, there was an exacting supervision and scrutiny "higher up," so that the enterprises of Ezra Brass were subject to an embarrassing surveillance which sharply limited the profit of them.

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The "real thing" — again to employ Ezra Brass's own form of speech — did not come until later, when the government's needs ran up into multimillions, and when "men of open minds," as he described them, came into control both of the letting and of the criticism of contracts.

Then it was that Ezra Brass first secured a satisfactory opportunity for the exercise of his genius for business. The government wanted shoes for its soldiers. It wanted clothing for them. It must have blankets. Ezra Brass knew very little about shoes, clothing, and blankets, but, as he was accustomed to boast, he was "mighty quick to learn."

He went East for his education, and got it from men whose charges for tuition he was willing enough to pay. He was presently "enabled to provide for his family" by furnishing, at twice or thrice their cost, army overcoats that had a tendency to dissolve in a heavy dew, and shoes that went to pieces the first time their wearers indiscreetly marched through a mud puddle. As for blankets, he

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found a manufacturer who knew how to make an "all wool" article out of ten per cent of sheep's coating and ninety per cent of cotton. But the price of cotton presently became so high that Ezra Brass decided not to go into blanket contracts.

After Grant had reduced the Confederate forts — Henry and Donelson — on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, and in some degree opened the South to traffic under military surveillance, the business sagacity of Ezra Brass enabled him to see and seize other opportunities.

Trade with the people along the shores of those rivers was permitted by the government only under such restrictions as were made necessary by war conditions. Cargoes must in every case be inspected, in order that no war materials or other contraband goods should in that way reach the Confederates.

A good many enterprising men at once bought steamboats, and actively engaged in this restricted commerce. But not one of them made so much money out of it as did

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Ezra Brass. That was because of his superior sagacity. His competitors, anxious to market large cargoes, sent comparatively large and costly steamboats up the rivers. If one of these was lost, through capture by a Confederate force or otherwise, the profits of its owner's business for many months were gone. Ezra Brass took no such foolish risks. He employed none but the smallest, most insignificant "dinkies" in the trade. His "luck" was so carefully cared for by his sagacity that he never lost even one of these small craft. The fact was often commented upon when news came that a Confederate raiding party had captured, looted, and destroyed some other man's more costly steamer, carrying away her cargo of goods permitted to be shipped.

But this was only a detail of Ezra Brass's success in the business. He was so vigilantly scrupulous in the selection of his cargoes with reference to the laws of contraband, that the inspectors always "passed" his steamers without the *sub rosa* but substantial bribes that his

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business competitors had to pay every time they sent a laden steamer up the Southern rivers.

Ezra Brass had made the important discovery that while every Western steamboat ostentatiously carries two great smoke-stacks, not one of them has any real need of more than one.

That discovery meant much to him. A Western steamboat's smoke-stack is a capacious funnel six feet or so in diameter, and sixty or seventy feet high. It occurred to Ezra Brass that one such smoke-stack might be made to hold what he called "a young fortune" in contraband goods. So on each of Ezra Brass's steamboats one smoke-stack was carefully cut off from its communication with the furnace fires, and was used as a receptacle for percussion caps, rifle cartridges, quinine, morphia, and other goods of inestimable value to a people at war whose access to foreign markets was rigidly blockaded.

Brass made other "improvements" in the construction of his steamboats. He put a

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double instead of a single boiler iron shield around his pilots. The space between was capable of holding quinine and morphia enough to pay the total cost of a voyage.

But all this was small business in comparison with the other things that Ezra Brass later took in hand. After the war had reached that stage when men like Ezra Brass might enjoy it with calm minds free from apprehensions, the ultimate success of the Federal arms was assured, and so the depreciated currency of the country was bound ultimately to be good. A dollar could be had at that time for sixty cents or less of value, and the dollar was certain to be worth a hundred cents in due time. In the same way Ezra Brass could buy government bonds bearing a high rate of interest at a low price, knowing perfectly that in the end the government bonds, interest and principal, would be paid off at a dollar for a dollar, in gold or its equivalent. So Ezra Brass had invested largely in government bonds.

But while he clearly foresaw that ultimately the war must end in the restoration of the

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Union, he shared with many of the other speculators in the land an earnest hope that it might not end too soon.

He said something like this to Hugh Marvin a little while before that day on which he came on board the steamboat to discuss business affairs with his subordinate, and got himself ordered off.

"They're sending Grant to the East," he said, "and I'm mighty sorry for that."

"But why?" asked Marvin. "Surely there is no man so likely to bring this war to a speedy end."

"Of course, and that's just it. Lee's army is the backbone of the Rebel strength, and I'm afraid Grant'll crush that in a hurry when he gets to work."

"But why should you object to that? Surely that would be the best thing that could happen for the country."

"Oh, the country be damned! I'm thinkin' of Ezra Brass. I'm a-makin' money hand over fist out o' this thing, and naturally I don't want it to quit just yet. I'd think you'd feel the

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same way, considering your own profits and the price I'm paying you."

"Oh, never mind the price you're paying me. I fixed that myself and I'm going to double it, just as soon as we get back up the river. You'll pay me whatever price I choose to ask, and so I'm under no obligations. As for the rest of it, every dollar you're making is blood money. The war would have ended a year ago, but for such greedy cormorants as you. You and your kind are keeping it up for the sake of what there is in it. You're murderers, all of you, and every soldier shot on either side is your victim. If there is a just God in the universe, and if he keeps a Hell anywhere, he'll reserve a particularly hot corner there for you and your kind!"

"That isn't a nice way for you to talk to the man who pays your wages."

"All the same, that's the way I am talking to you. You're a cold-blooded, unscrupulous scoundrel, and you know it. Worse still, so far as you are concerned, I know it. Never mind about that. You pay me wages only be-

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cause you must, and you pay me as little as you can. Now let me tell you that when I land this cotton at Cairo, you will have to look out for somebody else to do your work, and you'll not find him easily."

"Now you're mighty right about that," answered Ezra Brass, placatively. "I realize it. You're a master hand at business, and especially at never being afraid o' nothin'. There's a good deal of risk in this sort o' business, and I must say you've taken your share of it. But we've got a bigger thing on or just a-comin', an' I'm a-goin' to let you in on the ground floor in that."

"I wish you'd go over to one of the other steamboats," said Hugh Marvin, insistently. "Your presence is just now offensive to me. If you stay on this boat, you and I will quarrel to a certainty. Go away somewhere, and don't let me see you till we land at Cairo. Then maybe I'll talk business with you. If you don't go away,—well, it will be much better so."

"But I want to tell you about this new

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scheme. It's the biggest thing on ice, and I tell you I'm going to let you in on the ground floor."

"But I don't want to hear about it. Go away, I tell you. Go to another steamboat. I feel like washing my hands,—and the rest of me." Then, as Ezra Brass sat still with no indication of a purpose to move, Hugh Marvin turned upon him in uncontrollable exasperation and said:—

"If you don't take yourself off this boat within the next three minutes, I'll choke you to death, and throw you to the alligators. Go! Go now! Don't wait a minute."

What else the young man said, Ezra Brass did not wait to hear. He had concern enough for his personal safety to hurry away. But as it was his own habit never to let a disagreement of any kind interfere with "business," he ventured back upon Hugh Marvin's boat a few days later, with the result that he was again peremptorily ordered away as we have seen. This time he was both angry and puzzled—angry because he was puzzled. He

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could not at all understand young Marvin. He had no belief in anybody's integrity. He supposed it to be only a mask worn for purposes of deception, and laid aside at will when "business" was to be done. Yet here was this young fellow Marvin actually affronting him on two several days, after being informed that a big scheme was on foot, in which it was his purpose to let the young man share without limit.

Presently, as he went from Marvin's steamboat to another, his subtle mind wrought out an explanation which satisfied its curiosity.

"I see how it is," he muttered. "He's got some glimmering of this thing, and he's gittin' ready to strike for big figgers. I've offered him the ground floor, but he wants the cellar. I reckon I've got to give it to him. Anyhow, the whole thing 'll fall through if he backs out. Curious how a feller as smart as that lets his damned fool sentiments git in the way of his business prospects."

V

COMBS AND THAT SORT OF THING

YOUNG Marvin's conference with the captains satisfied him that all the cotton which had been bought in that region was now aboard the boats, or so nearly all of it that a longer delay in order to secure such stray bales as had not been found would cost more than it would come to.

Accordingly he ordered all the boats except his own to proceed up the river as far as Memphis, and there to await his coming or further orders from him.

As for his own boat, he had reasons, which he did not choose to disclose, for holding her at anchor where she was until such time as he should see fit to steam up the river.

The simple fact was that he "had a woman on his hands," and he did not know what to

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do with her. He could not determine that point until he could talk at leisure with the girl, and he could not do that till she should wake from a terribly needed slumber. So he kept his boat at anchor there in the river and simply waited.

There was not another woman on board the boat, — not even a negro chambermaid, — for this boat was engaged in a perilous sort of commerce, and not at all in the carrying of passengers.

So Hugh Marvin could not send even a message to the girl in her bomb-proof chamber. He had never occupied that chamber because, whenever there was danger of any kind, he made it his business to be on the hurricane-deck where his duty lay, or to sleep lightly in a "Texas" stateroom just under the pilot-house, so that the pilot might instantly awaken him by the clangor of a gong which hung within a foot of his head as he lay in his bunk.

Hugh Marvin had, therefore, never made an inspection of the protected chamber in

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which the girl slept. It occurred to him now that he had sent her thither without a word of inquiry as to the condition of the chamber,—that he did not know whether or not there were combs there, or brushes, or towels, or even a pitcher of water for bathing purposes.

This reflection troubled him mightily, the more because he remembered that the young woman's hair obviously had not been combed for many days past. *Was* there a comb in there? He could not remember. *Was* there a brush? He knew no more than he did about the furnishings of the moon. *Was* there a pitcher or a pail of water or a towel or a cake of soap there? Then arose the horrifying question: were there any sheets on the berth-bed? Or had he sent this delicately dainty creature to sleep in a berth last occupied perhaps by a man who slept in his boots and didn't care for water or towels?

The thing preyed upon his mind horribly. For somehow this girl had appealed to all that was tender and sympathetic in the young man's nature as no other woman had appealed

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to that side of him since as a boy he had been accustomed to put his strong arm around his little mother's waist and care for her as tenderly as if she had been a babe in arms.

In addition there was something about Gabrielle Latour that fascinated the young man. He would have scouted the suggestion that he was in love with her. He had met her less than twenty-four hours before, and he knew nothing whatever about her. The thought of love was therefore out of the question. At least, that is the reply that Hugh Marvin would instantly have made to such a suggestion.

But all that was chivalrous in him was enlisted in her behalf. Everything that concerned her welfare or comfort, even in the smallest and most insignificant way, seemed to him a thing of supreme moment.

So he went to his own room on the boat, and collected there all the spare combs and brushes he could find, and deposited them all at the door of the girl's stateroom, together with a supply of towels, two or three cakes of toilet soap in their original wrappers, a nail-

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brush, somewhat the worse for wear, but the best he had, and two large pails of water.

He would not wake the girl to tell her of these arrangements for her comfort, and as he had no chambermaid on board whom he could send into her room, he simply sat down just outside the door. There he continued to sit, hour after hour, awaiting some sound from within which should tell him that the girl was awake.

His vigil continued throughout the remaining hours of the brief spring day, but when it grew dark in the cabin and a lamp man came to set the lights a-going, Hugh Marvin signalled him to go away. He feared that the lighting up of the cabin might cut short the slumbers of the over-weary young woman, and, somehow, he was exceedingly solicitous that nothing to her detriment should happen. He had even forbidden the daily washing down of the decks, and had enjoined silence all over the boat during that day, with an earnest insistence which convinced the more imaginative of the men that some special danger threatened.

Finally, as Hugh Marvin sat there near the

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girl's door, he heard a stir within the room. Instantly he called to a servitor to bring the hot water which he had ordered the steward to keep in readiness. Then he rapped gently at the door, and said through the slats of the jalousie : —

“I fear you are unprovided with necessaries of the toilet. You will find everything that I can think of just outside your door.”

There came through the slats a lot of *mercis* and *biens* and *beaucoup's*, embedded in French sentences of which Marvin only imperfectly made out the significance. He hurried away to arrange with the steward for the prompt service of a little dinner for two.

VI

AN INTERRUPTED INTERVIEW

“**T**HANK you, Mr. Marvin, for the means of making my toilet.”

That was the first thing Gabrielle said when she came out of her room and the two sat down to dinner in the cabin. “The bath was very refreshing, and it is a relief to have my hair combed again.”

Marvin observed that the girl was even more beautiful than she had been before, and yet he was rather disposed to regret the loss of her Meg Merrilies appearance through the “doing up” of her hair.

“I hope you have slept well,” he said.

“I have slept,” she answered, but she did not add “well.” And Marvin observed that she was still excessively nervous, and that the look of anxiety in her countenance had not been

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altogether effaced by that other look of resolute self-control which she had put on.

With the instinctive impulse of masculine humanity, he hoped that dinner might "do her good." A man always thinks better of the efficacy of feeding than any woman does. Then in his eagerness to render her the service of soothing that was obviously her first necessity, it occurred to him that perhaps she needed stimulation. He didn't know much about stimulants, as it had never been his practice to drink anything that had alcohol in it, but he had so often seen people in a faint condition dosed with wine that he supposed that was the proper thing in such cases.

He knew that there was no wine of any sort on board, but among the emergency medical stores carried by the boat there was some whiskey — of what kind or quality he knew not. So before sitting down to dinner with the girl as his guest, he ordered some of the whiskey brought, and when it came, he pressed it upon his companion, saying, "You are very faint." That was the formula he had heard

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used by way of persuading women to take wine.

A queer little smile rippled over the girl's face as she replied:—

“I fancy I should soon be a good deal worse than very faint if I were to drink spirits. I don't know; I never tried it. But anyhow I do not want anything of that kind. The soup is hot, and that will answer all my needs.”

“The soup is horrible!” he exclaimed after tasting it. “It is made of corned beef or salt horse or something else equally unfit. Don't drink it, I pray you. Here is coffee. Take that instead.”

The girl seemed glad enough to be thus excused from swallowing more than a first spoonful of the soup which Marvin had correctly characterized as horrible. And—perhaps in timid anticipation of like characteristics in the viands yet to come—she made haste to say:—

“I think I have no appetite, Mr. Marvin. Perhaps the steward could give me a bit of toast. If not, it is no matter.”

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"Excuse me for a few minutes," the young man replied, hastily arising and walking away toward the steward's precincts.

"What have you here," he asked imperatively, "fit for a lady who is ill, to eat? Have the cook make her some toast at once, and don't let him scorch it. Have you any eggs?"

"None but limed ones," the steward answered.

But Hugh Marvin had not waited for the steward to report upon his supplies. Resorting to the high hand as was his practice upon proper occasion, he flung open the doors of the refrigerators and other storage places and made search upon his own account.

"Here are some fresh guinea eggs," he presently called out. "Let the cook poach two of them very lightly and put them on the toast. Save the rest for the young lady's use later. And what's this?" As he asked the question he drew from its hiding-place behind a block of ice a young chicken dressed and ready for broiling.

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“Why didn’t you tell me of this? Where did you get it? No, don’t answer. You or somebody else stole it, I suppose, but it’s too late now to restore it to its owner. Have it broiled at once and serve it to the young lady. And tell the cook that if he scorches it, or serves it underdone, I’ll throw him and you overboard. I’ll do it, too. You understand that?”

Then suppressing the outward manifestations of his wrath he returned to the table and very gently asked the young woman to wait a little while, assuring her that something fit to eat was coming presently.

The little time of enforced waiting served a good purpose, though its necessity annoyed Hugh Marvin not a little. It had been his purpose to occupy the girl’s mind with dining and thus prevent any lapse of the conversation into matters personal until such time as she might be sufficiently refreshed to endure. But this necessity of waiting spoiled that plan and purpose completely. Two persons almost completely strangers and meeting under unusual

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circumstances simply cannot sit at table waiting for their dinner to be served, without falling into conversation concerning themselves and their circumstances.

So it fell out in this case.

"You have sent all the other boats up the river," the girl said. "I heard you give the order. Why did you do that?"

"Well, they are very slow, you know, and they have valuable cargoes, and it isn't as safe here as it is at Memphis."

"Then this boat is faster than the others? Or safer for some reason?"

"No, not that; but you see I feel a certain responsibility. I am staying here with this boat because I want to restore you to your friends before going up the river. If you'll tell me where to find them, I'll —"

"I have no friends, Mr. Marvin," the girl interrupted, with a drawn look on her face, and with lips set and almost livid.

"But surely there must be some one somewhere —"

"No, there is not. I tell you I am alone in

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the world. I'll tell you all about it when — when I feel strong enough."

Fortunately the eggs and toast arrived at this moment and the chicken soon followed. Marvin, seeing foreshadowings of a breakdown, welcomed the interruption, saying: —

"We'll talk over all that matter at another time. At present we'll discuss the chicken and nothing else, or at least nothing more serious. I'm not sure that the chicken isn't serious. I found it hidden away in a refrigerator. It was never meant by the steward for our eating. I suspect that the steward or some of his people stole it. But as I am powerless to restore it to its owner, I have confiscated it. Were the eggs cooked to your taste?"

In that way he rattled on till the supper was done, taking care to talk so continuously of indifferent things as to excuse the young woman from talking at all, except by way of saying "yes" or "no" now and then.

Her shrewd womanly intelligence penetrated his purpose from the beginning, and her appreciation of the tactful tenderness he was mani-

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festing toward her touched her well-nigh to tears, till at last she broke out:—

“You are very good and kind and generous to me, and it is only a foolish weakness on my part that calls for it. You want to proceed up the river with your steamboat. Will you not give the order without further delay? I earnestly beg that you will. Then I will tell you all there is to tell. Now that it has cleared away there ought to be a fine moon. Can we not sit outside somewhere while I tell you what you must hear?”

Nothing could better have suited Hugh Marvin's wish. This young woman's eyes somehow fascinated him, so that if he looked into them or even glanced at them while she was talking, he was sure to lose the meaning of at least half she said. He felt that if they two could sit out upon the “guards,”—as the promenade deck of a Western steamer is called,—where there was no light but that of the moon, he could better attend to whatever it was that she might have to say, than if she faced him in full light looking at him with

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those wonderful eyes, and letting him see the still more wonderful play of expression upon her strangely mobile features.

Accordingly he bade a steward set some chairs upon the forecastle guard, and provide some wraps for the lady.

"I'm afraid," he said hesitatingly, "that you'll have to put up with a blanket or a bed-quilt, as I haven't any sort of feminine wraps on board. But there is nobody to see or to criticise, and though the night is soft you might be chilled, sitting out there with the boat in motion."

Again the tender thoughtfulness of his consideration for her touched the girl, and as she turned away for some purely pretended purpose, a tear or two of a not unhappy sort trickled down her cheeks.

Meanwhile Marvin went to give orders for the getting of the boat under way. He directed that the timber rafts which had protected her hull in her wanderings up and down the sluggish creeks and bayous should be cast off. With them in tow the underpowered and

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heavily laden boat could have made no headway at all upstream in the more rapid reaches of the river.

Half an hour later the boat was steaming slowly up the stream, and the young man and young woman seated themselves comfortably on the forward guards. There was indeed a fine moon which shone through a fleecy white mist that softened without obscuring the light. But the course of the Mississippi is a tortuous one, so that sometimes the moonlight fell into the faces of these two, while sometimes it did not fall upon them at all.

"It was weak and foolish in me," the girl began, "not to be able to talk with you before. But I have gone through so much of late, and the future is so completely a blank wall before my eyes, that I feel shaken up, and —"

"Now pray, my dear young lady," the young man answered, interrupting, "I beg that you will think no more of that. I think you have been wonderfully brave. Most women would have been helplessly ill or even delirious after such experiences as those that you have gone

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through. Now let us understand each other. I feel as tenderly toward you as a brother might. I don't want you to tell me anything that it distresses you to tell. I have no idly curious desire to pry into your affairs or your life. I only want you to tell me so much as may help me to help you. You say you have no friends to whom I can take you or send you?"

"No, I have no friends anywhere on earth — except you. You have shown yourself so good a friend that I simply must tell you all about myself. It would be disloyal to friendship itself for me to do less than that. Much of the story is painful, — a part of it horrible, — but I must tell it all to you, and I will be strong to do so."

At that moment there came an explosion on the deck below. What had happened Hugh Marvin did not know, but what to do he did know, and he did it quickly. He grasped the slender girl by the waist, mounted to the taff-rail, leaped to the deck below — ten feet or so — and hurriedly carried his human burden to the very bow of the boat, where he laid her upon

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the deck, under protection of a rank of cotton bales.

“Lie there!” he commanded. “Don’t rise even to a sitting posture or a waft of the wind may blow scalding steam upon you. Hot steam rises, you know. Lie still, while I go to find out what has happened.”

Instantly he left her, giving her no time to remonstrate against his deliberate going into the danger from which he was so solicitously trying to protect her.

Paying no heed to his instructions, she at once arose and followed him through the blinding cloud of vapor that enveloped the boat. She saw him only by glimpses through the fog-like steam. But she managed to follow him as he made his explorations.

Hugh Marvin knew pretty nearly all there is to know about a steamboat. He saw at once that the boilers had not exploded. If that had occurred, the upper decks would have been reduced to kindling wood, and the boat would have been afire. He saw that the accident had not been the blowing out of a cylinder head,

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for in that case the outflow of steam would have been cut off almost instantly by the automatic action of the machinery.

He quickly made out, therefore, that the steampipe supplying steam to the engines had burst, and he knew what to do.

"Set all the escape valves wide open," he ordered, "even the mud valves, to let off the steam."

Then turning to the stokers he commanded : —

"Rake out the fires quick."

These measures ended the danger by ending the supply of scalding steam that was escaping from the broken pipe. But in the meanwhile two poor fellows had been terribly burned, and were writhing in agony upon the deck.

Then Gabrielle Latour gave to Hugh Marvin a new revelation of her nature and of her capacity of helpfulness.

She called to a deck-hand : —

"Bring a torch at once — two of them or more if you have them !"

Instantly the men brought great swinging

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baskets fastened to iron rods and filled with flaming fagots of fat pine. They placed the torches in their usual sockets, so that they might overhang the guards and let their droppings of flaming resin fall into the water. But in this position the torches threw less of light upon the bodies of the scalded men than the girl wanted there, so she commanded the men : —

“Bring the torches over here and place them so that they will give me light.”

“But the drippings will set the boat afire, Miss,” answered one of the men.

“There is plenty of water in the river,” she replied. “Let some men stand by with buckets to put out any fire that may start.”

During this time Marvin was absent bringing the boat to anchor. When he returned, Gabrielle said to him : —

“Please direct the men as to the lights, and please send word to the steward to bring me all the cooking soda he has. These poor fellows are terribly burned.”

Then she asked for a pocket-knife with which

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to cut away their clothing. The knife proved to be dull, and after an effort to use it, she threw it aside. Then, thrusting her hand into her bodice, she brought out a long, slender Siamese creese — a knife sharply pointed for purposes of killing, and with waved edges ground down to the keenness of a razor.

With this she quickly bared the breasts and shoulders of the scalded men, and the soda having come, she sprinkled it over their wounds, giving them almost immediate relief.

Then she called for such surgical dressings as there were on board, and saturating them in a solution of the soda, she carefully and tenderly dressed the wounds. Finally she covered the dressings with strips torn from sheets that she had asked to have brought to her.

Then rising from her knees, and paying no heed to the thanks of the men whose sufferings she had so mightily and so quickly relieved by her simple appliances, she turned to Hugh Marvin and said : —

“Please have these poor fellows put to bed at once as comfortably as you can. In the

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morning we can know whether their wounds are deep and dangerous or only superficial and painful."

As she stood there in the flare of the torches, with a light of human helpfulness in her countenance, Hugh Marvin thought that no other vision so beautiful had ever been his to contemplate. A moment later she said to him, as the scalded men were borne away to their bunks : —

"I think I will go to bed now. You have much to do in getting the boat repaired, and *I am very tired.*"

There was a note in the last four words that touched the young man tenderly.

"Yes, go to bed," he answered, "and may all good dreams go with you. Do you know," he added impulsively, "you seem to me a wonderful woman and a wonderfully good one?" Then without giving her time for answer he added : —

"Good night. I must look after the boat."

VII

THE MYSTERY OF GABRIELLE

MARVIN'S first care, after Gabrielle Latour had retreated to her room, was to set the engineers at work repairing the vent in the steam supply pipe. The metal was not yet sufficiently cooled to be handled, but Marvin, who had a good deal of what is called "executive ability," pointed out and insisted upon the possibility of getting sheets of copper and rivets and all other necessary things in readiness with the copper plates cut to fit, without waiting as the mechanics were disposed to do for the pipe to cool. In that way he saved a good deal of time in the prosecution of the work of repair.

Then he thought of another thing, and as he was leaving the lower deck to attend to it, his foot struck something, and he stooped and picked

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it up. It was the Siamese creese which the girl, in her intentness of merciful purpose, had left there upon the deck. He thrust it into his pocket, all scabbardless as it was, and went to carry out his original purpose, which was to send the steward ashore with a crew of men to find and buy such provisions as he could, of a kind that the woman passenger could eat on the northward voyage.

The steward hesitated, protesting that he didn't know what might happen to him on shore if he should venture thither.

"You coward! I'll go myself," the young man answered in disgust.

Then, without waiting for anything the steward might desire to say in reply, Marvin went to the lower deck, summoned a boat's crew, lowered a yawl, and went ashore.

It was nearly sunrise when he returned to the steamboat, but when he did so, he had a supply of eggs and chickens, a freshly dressed spring lamb, a jar filled with cream, a demijohn of new milk, and some other things of an equally acceptable kind.

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Such supplies were exceedingly scarce in that region at that time, but Hugh Marvin had armed himself, before going ashore, with search warrants of the most effective and searching kind — namely a number of United States gold coins. With the aid of these he had secured what he desired in the way of supplies.

He was happy now in the thought that the young woman who had been so strangely thrust on his hands would have proper food to eat during the voyage to Cairo, which must occupy many days and nights, for the reason that the steamboat could not make an upstream speed of more than three or four miles an hour. Somehow his concern for that young person's comfort seemed to grow with every hour.

The thought of her was at no moment absent from his mind.

"I wonder who she is," he meditated, after he had inspected the progress of the repair work, "and where she came from, and how she came to be there in the canebrake, starving and suffering. One thing is clear: she is a woman of high breeding, culture, refinement,

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and character. How it comes about that she has no relatives or friends I cannot imagine. Another thing is certain: she has suffered terribly. She has gone through experiences that would have wrecked the intellect of any ordinary woman. But she is not an ordinary woman. She is altogether extraordinary, and the loveliest woman I ever saw."

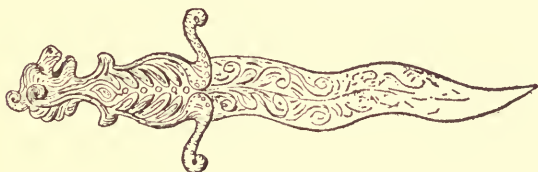
And yet if anybody had been there to suggest to Hugh Marvin that he had fallen in love with Gabrielle Latour, he would have laughed the thought to scorn.

Just at that moment some movement of his body caused the unsheathed creese to prick him sharply in the side. Its needle-like point, aided by its razor-like edges, had pierced his pocket and let the knife slip down to a place where it came into contact with his flesh.

Hastily drawing the knife out of the pocket, he curiously inspected it. It was a piece of exquisite oriental workmanship. The handle was of silver inwrought with gold, set with high-colored stones, and wrought into a dragon's head, to which diamonds supplied the eyes.

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The blade, about four inches long, was in wavelike form, its curves tapering to a point needle-like in its fineness, while the edges were ground to exquisite sharpness. It was the ideal knife of the assassin who plans to make quick and sure work of his death-stroke. The knife looked something like this :—



Along the wavelike course of the blade there was a delicate tracery of incised ornamentations, designed apparently to give artistic effect to assassination.

“And she has been carrying that in her cor-sage,” Hugh Marvin muttered to himself. “I wonder why. She has enough hot blood in her veins to be an assassin if she were a person of evil mind. But she is not. She is gentle, kindly, merciful, and I imagine that the only use she ever made of that ingeniously cruel

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knife was the considerate one of getting at those poor fellows' wounds last night in order to dress them. And she did that with all the confidence of a surgeon's skill. I wonder where she learned it all. I wonder who she is, anyhow. She has told me her name, — Gabrielle Latour, — but that does not enlighten me in the least. Young as she is, she has had a history. I wonder if she will care to tell me what it is. Of course I could never ask."

Then after a moment he said to himself:—

"It makes no difference; she is very certainly a highly bred and highly self-respecting woman. She has good blood in her veins, and she has never done anything unworthy of it. But I wonder when and how she learned to dress burns with cooking soda. I don't think I ever heard of that before, but it is certainly effective. The groans of pain ceased almost at the moment when she put the dressings on. I'd give a good many bales of cotton to know the whole story of that girl's life."

At that moment the girl herself emerged from the cabin and joined him upon the deck.

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"Oh, you have saved my creese," she exclaimed in evident satisfaction. "Thank you more than I can say. I feared I had lost it."

"Yes, I found it upon the deck below, and cared for it. It is an exquisite piece of workmanship."

"I suppose so," she replied with a far-away look in her eyes. "I never thought of it in that way."

This reply left the young man wondering more curiously than ever. He had half satisfied himself that the extraordinary knife had been cherished by her because of the beauty of its workmanship. That was the only reason he could imagine for her carrying it upon her person. Yet now she said, "I never thought of it in that way," and he was left wondering anew.

But the girl gave him little time for wondering.

"I want to see the scalded men as soon as I can," she said. "Please take me to them."

"Certainly," he answered; "but it is just sunrise. You must be an early riser."

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"Oh, I don't know. I always get up as soon as it is daylight. I must look after these poor wounded men. I have only waited for sunrise so that there might be light enough."

"Then you have been long awake?" he answered.

"I have not slept at all. How could I, when I could not know till morning about the burns—whether they were fatal or not? You see all I could do last night was to alleviate pain. There may be something more important to do now. Come, we are wasting time."

Again the young man was set wondering as he conducted the girl to the place where the wounded men lay. And his wondering was increased when he observed the confident and skilful way in which she removed the dressings and minutely examined the wounded parts.

After intently inspecting the wounds of one of the men, the girl looked up quickly and asked:—

"Is there a case of surgical instruments on board?"

Marvin answered in the negative, adding,

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“But if you’ll tell me what you want, perhaps I can get you a substitute.”

“I want a pair of forceps, though perhaps a large pair of tweezers might do. You see the men are not deeply burned—or at least not very deeply. But this one has had a great many fragments of metal—copper it seems to be—driven into his flesh. That is dangerous. I want some instrument with which to remove them.”

“I’ll see what I can find,” answered Marvin, hurrying away. Presently he returned, bringing everything in the way of pincers that the machinists could supply. The girl hurriedly looked over the implements, and found one of them with which she succeeded in removing the larger pieces of copper from the man’s flesh. But for the removal of the smaller pieces, equally important, the forceps proved to be useless. After puzzling for a moment the girl turned her great, soft eyes upon Marvin, so that he almost quivered under the intense gaze, and said:—

“This man’s life is at stake. I must have

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the implement I need to save him. You have a blacksmith's forge on board. Let me use it, and I think I can make the instrument myself."

With that she arose, carefully drew the bed-clothes over the suffering man, enjoining those in attendance to prevent his taking cold, and in company with the wondering Hugh Marvin, hurriedly made her way to the lower deck, where the portable blacksmith's forge stood.

Slender, fragile-looking creature that she was, with dainty fingers that expressed intense nervousness in every motion, it seemed to Hugh Marvin little short of a miracle when she set to work to examine such supplies of steel as the blacksmith had on hand, and selecting a piece that might answer her purpose, thrust it into the furnace, bidding the blacksmith's helper blow his bellows.

It seemed still more wonderful when, after turning the piece of steel two or three times in the fire, she drew it forth and proceeded to hammer it into the shape she desired. Then she cut off about seven inches of the thinly



WITH A DEXTERITY THAT ASTONISHED THE BLACKSMITH WELL-
NIGH OUT OF HIS WITS.

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flattened end of the little bar. This she heated again to whiteness, and with a dexterity that astonished the blacksmith well-nigh out of his wits, bent it into the form of a pair of tweezers.

After thrusting it into the water-tub by way of cooling it, she handed it to the smith, saying:—

“My hands are very tired, will you please file the edges of the biting part? You know how it should be done? slantwise, so that it may hold whatever it grasps.”

When the implement was finished, the young woman returned to the wounded man, and with a dexterity that seemed admirable in the eyes of Hugh Marvin, extracted the minute fragments of copper that had been driven into his flesh by the explosion of the steam-pipe.

“The man will get well now,” she said confidently, as Marvin led her away to breakfast, wondering, wondering, wondering.

VIII

THE STORY OF GABRIELLE

AT breakfast Marvin did not invite any confidences. He wanted to have a free and uninterrupted conversation with the girl. He wanted her to tell her own story in her own way, and there was not time for that at breakfast, nor would there be opportunity for it until the steamboat could be got under way again. Moreover, neither he nor she had slept the night before.

Accordingly during breakfast he held the conversation to simple topics, a task in which the young woman aided him by inquiring curiously concerning the source of the fresh supplies, and especially the rich cream he gave her for her coffee.

After he had told her of his journey ashore by night, she said :—

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"You are certainly very good to me. But you have lost a night's sleep. Can you not take time to-day to make it up?"

"So have you," he answered, "and you *must* make it up. Let us make a pact. After breakfast I have the repairs in the steam-pipe to look after. I am very anxious to get the boat under way. I think I can do so by noon. Then I will take a few hours' sleep. In the meanwhile you, too, are to sleep all you can. We will meet at supper this evening, and after supper we'll go out upon the forward guards and resume our talk."

With that he excused himself and went to the lower deck.

When the two met again at supper, the girl seemed fresher than she had been at any time before, in spite of the fact that all the clothing she wore had been worn for a week or more under circumstances that did not tend to preserve its freshness. With that feminine ingenuity which it is the despair of masculine humanity to understand, she had managed to alter the style or the fit or the "hang" of the

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gown she wore so that it looked like something else.

"You must have found needles and thread in your room," the young man said with undisguised admiration of the result.

"No; oh, no," she answered; "but there were pins."

Marvin said no more. He simply sank into his chair wondering how, with nothing better than pins to work with, the girl had managed to make so great a transformation in a gown of the utmost simplicity.

When the two met upon the deck in the moonlight, after Gabrielle had dressed the wounds of her patients anew, the boat was slowly steaming up the river. There was a moon nearly full. The air of the Southern springtime was soft and warm, and the silence was unbroken except by the muffled and soothingly monotonous sounds that came from the engines and the paddle-wheel at the stern of the vessel. The conditions were ideal for the telling of the young woman's story, and she had nerved herself to tell it fully, even in its painful parts.

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"You suppose me to be a French Creole of Louisiana, of course," she began, "but I am not. French and English are so much alike to me, — I mean, they are so equally my mother tongues, — that I sometimes forget and speak in one language when I should use the other."

"I have observed that," the young man answered. "But I have noticed also that you never interlard your English sentences with French words or phrases. From that I infer that you really know your French thoroughly. For the interjection of French words and phrases into English sentences is merely a trick of people who wish to pretend to knowledge that they have not."

"Is it? I didn't know that. But of course when I am speaking French, I must use only French words; and when I am speaking English, I must use none but English words. That is a matter of course."

"To so honest a mind as yours, yes," he answered. "But not all people are so honest as you are."

"But one must be honest and truthful," she

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answered with a tone of amazed questioning. "Is it not so?"

"Many people are not so strongly impressed with that obligation as you are," he answered. "But pardon me, I did not mean to interrupt. I am anxious only to listen."

"Thank you!" she said. Then to the utter astonishment of the young man, she seemed to break entirely away from her subject.

"You know about Coligny?" she asked, "and the Duke of Guise, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew? And you know about the Camisards and the siege of Rochelle, and all the rest of it?"

"I have read about all that in history," he answered, "but I can't say that I remember it at all accurately."

"Well, at least you know the history in a general way. Very well. My ancestors, on my father's side, were soldiers under Coligny and under Jean Cavalier, the boy-commander of the Camisards. They were Huguenots, and when, many years afterward, the Huguenots were driven out of France by the persecutions there,

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my ancestors were among those that came to America. My great, great, I don't know how many times great-grandfather settled on the coast of South Carolina. The story is that he brought no money or property with him, but he was a man of energy and ability, and so he soon acquired land and became a prosperous planter, and founded the family.

"Well, a long time ago, my grandfather removed to Louisiana. He set himself up as a merchant and cotton factor in New Orleans, and at his death my father succeeded him in the business. My father married my mother, a Frenchwoman, born in Paris, but living then in Louisiana on the plantation up the bayou there where I came to you to beg."

"No," he interrupted, "say rather where you came to me to ask for that hospitality which it was gladness to grant."

"As you please," she answered, "but I felt myself to be a beggar all the same. You see you are a man of very generous mind, but I didn't know it then, and so it was as a beggar that I came to you.

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"I was born in New Orleans and lived there a good deal. But I lived a good part of the time on the plantation where you first met me. My mother never could learn English, — perhaps because my father spoke both languages equally well, and French was the language always spoken in the household, — at least whenever my mother was present, and out of respect for her. But I was sent to English-speaking schools in order that my English might be kept good.

"Finally my mother died. She was struck by lightning. You must know that all my people die sudden and violent deaths. It is Fate, or Providence, as you will, but it is always so."

Here the girl paused in her narrative, and, without asking to be excused, went away to her room for a few minutes. Hugh Marvin understood, and he was much too tactful either to offer escort or to await her return, and in that way extort explanation or apology from her. He made some errand to the pilot-house instead, and remained absent until he was sure that Ga-

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brielle had returned to the forward deck. Then he joined her there, saying : —

“Pardon me if I have kept you waiting. It seemed desirable that I should speak with the pilot.”

The girl answered with a simple “Thank you ; you are always very kind.”

Then she resumed her story. “When my mother died — my mother was a Catholic, you know — I was so sorely stricken that I wanted to go into a convent and become a nun, though I was not a Catholic. I felt that I wanted to get out of a world that no longer held my mother. That was all I thought about the matter.

“Presently it was arranged that I should go to France and enter a helpful sisterhood, not to become a nun, but to be trained as a nurse. You see I was getting to be a tall girl then, and I saw no prospect for myself except to become just a young lady. That seemed to me to be a very poor outlook. I wanted to be useful in the world, and so I went to Paris and served for three years in the institute. I

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learned how to care for the sick and wounded in every way. Many times I was called upon to stitch up gaping wounds. Many times, while waiting for the doctor to come, I have set fractures so far successfully that he has accepted and approved my operation and left it so.

“In the institute we were required to learn everything that might be useful to us in nursing the sick and the wounded. Among other things we had to go to the forge and learn to make for ourselves whatever instruments, of a simple sort at least, our nursing might require. That is why I knew how to forge that pair of forceps when it was needed. It used to tire my hands and arms terribly, but I learned how to do it all, ‘in aid of humanity.’ That was the appeal the sisters always made to us.

“Finally this war approached and I was brought home to New Orleans. My father and my three brothers went into the army and I was left in the care of my aunt.

“Now I am going to tell you about the

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creese which I know you have been wondering about. One of my brothers once made the journey around the world. He bought that creese in the far east somewhere—I don't know where. He was interested in it because of its workmanship, just as you have been; but he was still more interested in it because he was told that a princess had saved her honor by plunging it into her own breast at a time when no other salvation was possible to her.

“He gave me the knife as a curiosity at first. But when all my mankind went into the war, this young brother of mine came to me and asked to see the creese. When I had brought it to him, he carefully examined its point and its edges. Then he said to me: ‘Remember the princess who once used this. Use it as resolutely as she did, if occasion arises. Use it against your assailant if you can. If not, use it against yourself, remembering that death is immeasurably preferable to dishonor.’ I have carried it in my corsage ever since, resolved to use it, if need be, in the

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way he said. To a loyal woman, you know, the command of her father or her brother is law.

“But I didn’t mean to talk of that, I only wanted to explain how I came to carry the creese in my corsage. I shall always carry it there.

“Now let me go back to what I was saying. When this war broke out and my father and brothers went into the army, I was left alone with my aunt in New Orleans. My father was killed in the seven days’ battle around Richmond. One of my brothers was killed at Chancellorsville, another fell at Sharpsburg, and the third—a mere boy, Pierre—was among the ‘missing,’ after Pickett’s charge at Gettysburg. We hoped for a time, my aunt and I, that he might not have been killed, but only wounded, and that he might be found in some Northern hospital. We had inquiries made in every direction, but all in vain. Most of the ‘missing’ in that Gettysburg charge were buried in trenches and without being identified, and my brother was undoubtedly

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among the number. It is our family habit, as I told you before, to die with boots on, though we have never been violent people or people whose conduct invited violence.

“Now let me tell you the rest. When Butler came to New Orleans and issued his infamous order permitting his soldiers to judge for themselves whether they should feel insulted by the conduct of any woman of the city, and if they chose to feel insulted, authorizing them to treat us as vile creatures, my aunt grew alarmed for my safety. You see under such orders it wasn’t possible for me or any well-behaved woman to walk the streets at all. If one of us met a half-dozen drunken soldiers, and stepped aside to let them pass, our very courtesy could be construed as an insult, subjecting us to the most brutal treatment in return.”

“Yes, I understand,” answered Marvin. “Butler ought to have been cashiered and hanged for issuing that order, and there are many people at the North who were disappointed that he was not. But I did not mean to interrupt. Pardon me!”

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“Well, at first my aunt thought I should be safe if I stayed indoors. We had a large garden where I could take my exercise. But one day a squad of drunken soldiers came to the house and forced their way into it. They demanded to see me, accusing me of having aided confederates, held as prisoners, to escape. I had never done anything of the kind, and besides these men had no authority to arrest me or even to inquire about me. They were simply soldiers wandering about the streets. They hadn’t even a corporal in command of them.

“My aunt had hidden me under the wooden water cistern in the garden, and so when the men wandered all over the house upon a pretence of hunting for me, but meanwhile punching holes in the pictures, pouring molasses over the furniture, and pocketing many things of value, they failed to find me. My aunt was extremely courteous to them. We had some very fine and strong old sherry in the house, and this she set before them, bidding them help themselves.

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“The result was what she intended. The men were soon helplessly drunk, and while they lay sleeping on the sofas and beds, and some of them on the floor, she and I fled from the house. We already had a military permit to go to our plantation on the bayou—there where you first saw me. So that night we set out, and after that we lived on the plantation.”

“But what became of the New Orleans house and its contents?”

“We never knew; we never cared about it. We only wanted to be safe, and we thought we should be so on the plantation. But as it turned out, we were not. Don’t you think war is cruelly wrong, Mr. Marvin?”

“Utterly, infamously wrong,” he answered with fervor. “No words can half express its hideousness. War is simply savagery let loose. It is crime and its conduct is fruitful of crime. It is useless also and worse than useless. True it settles questions, but those questions could be more fairly settled by other means, at vastly smaller cost in money, and without the loss of

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a single life or the widowing and orphaning of a single family. It is a resort to brute force, utterly unworthy of civilized human beings. Morally it is on an exact level with a murderous Kentucky mountain feud."

The young man wanted to go on, and, as one who had faced fire without flinching, he had a right to his opinion on the subject. But he was restrained by a fear that he should fall to preaching on a subject which always aroused all that was best and most intense in his nature. So he interrupted the flow of his own discourse by saying : —

"Pardon me, I want to hear the rest of your story."

Then the girl resumed : —

"After we went to the plantation we were a good deal bothered by raids, — some of them from one side and some from the other. The raiders carried off pretty nearly everything we had to eat, including all the farm animals and fowls, and all the meat and all the grain. They gave us receipts for all these things and told us that they would be paid for. But we

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couldn't eat the paper receipts, and so we often had to live upon wild greens gathered in the fields.

"Still, thus far the raiders were commanded by officers who were gentlemen, and sometimes they left us a little meal and a little bacon to keep us from starving. Of course all the negroes were carried away from the plantation except a few faithful old house-servants who always hid themselves in a time of raiding.

"We had five bales of cotton, and the few negroes who remained dug a pit and buried them near the bayou bank so that we might perhaps sell them to the people from the North who are buying cotton down here. But somebody found the burial-place, dug up the cotton, and carried it away. That was only a little while before I saw you."

"Pardon the interruption," broke in young Marvin, "but were those five bales marked in any way?"

"Only with a letter 'L,' surrounded by a circle. But why do you ask?"

"Only that I have a good deal to do with

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cotton bales, and I might happen to stumble upon these. Go on with your story, please."

"Well, at last came the negro raid, a few days before I saw you. When my aunt found that the force consisted mainly of negro troops who were shouting, 'Remember Fort Pillow,'—though I don't know what that meant,—she became terribly afraid for me. So she sent me to hide in the swamp.

"When I thought the raiders were gone, I crept back to find my aunt. I found her, Mr. Marvin, with three bayonet wounds through her gentle breast.

"The house was in ashes. So were all the negro quarters. So were all the gin-houses, sugar-houses, and everything else. The plantation was a scene of utter desolation."

The young man shuddered. All that he said was:—

"And men call that 'civilized' war. Damn such civilization!"

He was on the point of apologizing for the strong word, but seeing an unmistakable "Amen" written upon the girl's moonlit

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countenance, he let it go at that, and she resumed her narrative.

"I found only one living creature on the plantation. That was old Michael, the superannuated negro carriage-driver. He seemed even feebler than I had known him to be before, but he helped me dig a grave for my aunt there in the house grounds, where even the trees had been burned. There wasn't any prayerbook to be had, but Michael remembered a part of the Episcopal service for the dead, while I remembered some of the Catholic prayers. So we recited what we could as we lowered the body into the grave and covered it with earth, leaving the rest to God."

Here the girl rose and went away for a time. Again Hugh Marvin manufactured some errand of duty, so that she might return unobserved, and that on his return he might find her seated and awaiting him. When he did so, the girl, obviously controlling her emotions with difficulty, recognized his tactfulness merely by saying "Thank you!"

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Then without waiting for any reply from him, she broke again into her story.

“We had not finished the filling up of the grave, when poor old Michael suddenly stood upright, turned ashy pale,—in the way that the black negroes do, you know,—and then sank helpless to the ground. By way of explanation to me, he said :—

“‘I done cotched three o’ de bullets, Mis’ Gabr’elle, when the fightin’ was a-goin’ on. But I cotched ’em in a good cause, a-tryin’ to save yo’ aunt.’

“A moment later the poor old man was dead.

“With my own hands I dug another grave there and placed the faithful servitor in it. I repeated all I could of the burial services. Then I shovelled the earth into the grave, and then, seeing another raiding party approaching, I ran back to the swamp and lay down in my hiding-place in the canebrake.

“I stayed there for two days or three, I don’t remember. I was out of my head, I reckon; anyhow I stayed there till you came

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and started your fire and began to fry your bacon. I was famished. I had eaten no morsel of food for a week, I think. I had fully intended to starve to death there. I didn't see anything else for me to do, and so I nerved myself to that. But when I smelled the bacon, I lost my courage and went to you for food."

It was Hugh Marvin's habit to possess his soul in patience under all circumstances. Just now, as he sat there looking into the hollow, distressed eyes of this young woman, who was manifestly on the verge of collapse, he found it difficult to do so. He wanted to kill the man who had led that raid and all the men who had participated in it. But as that could not be, his feeling was forced to find expression in words.

"That is war," he said with intense feeling, "war in its 'civilized' form, as men say, pretending that savagery might be worse. There *is* nothing worse. War *is* savagery. It is utterly devilish. It is hell broken loose. Yet history and poetry and all the arts have loved to

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celebrate it as a manifestation of the higher qualities of manhood. It is nothing of the sort. It is brutality pure and simple, and the man who can make the most brutish brute of himself is the one most applauded.

“The one thing most highly exalted by the poet and the historian is courage of the physical sort. Yet what is it but a virtue that men share with brute beasts? The bravest soldier that ever lived could be beaten at his own game by a ferocious and insensate bulldog. Soldiers proudly boast that they do not make war upon women and children, and they do not in any open and honest way. But women and children are the real victims, the real sufferers from every act of war.

“It is easy enough for a man in good health to stand unflinching under fire. Any man who could not do that or would not do it upon necessary occasion would be destitute of all manliness. But why should a thing so slight be exalted as the highest reach of human virtue?

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“Besides, the whole thing is unfair. The proudest armies in all the world have never for one moment hesitated to take unfair advantage of their adversaries in order to slaughter them. That is what the word ‘strategy’ means, and it is all that it means. The duellist and the prize-fighter are more honorable. They at any rate try to equalize conditions so that their fighting may be fair. The soldier, on the contrary, takes every unfair advantage that he can. He lies to his enemy and cheats him in a thousand ways, and it is the most successful liar and cheat who wins battles and campaigns. Do you wonder that I hate war and will have nothing to do with it?”

“Then you regard all soldiers as bad and brutish men?” the girl queried.

“No, I think them badly misled and deceived men. I think they have mistaken the shell for the kernel of courage. There is a gravestone in a cemetery at Memphis which records that once the pilot of a burning steamboat, in order to save the lives of the crew and passengers in his charge, re-

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fused to leave his post though ordered and entreated to do so; that he thus deliberately sacrificed himself in order that others, strangers to him, might escape the fury of the flames.¹ That pilot was a greater hero than any man, North or South, has shown himself to be in this war. Yet his deed of heroic renunciation and self-sacrifice is remembered only upon an obscure gravestone, and it will never occur to any congress to award a pension to his widow.

“I tell you, Miss Latour, the world is still essentially savage. What we boast of as our civilization is nothing more than a veneer; it is thinner even than that — it is scarcely more than a coat of varnish.”

The girl sat thinking and not answering. She had suffered much and she was still suffering. Presently she seemed to rouse herself, as if from a dream. “I think you are right,” she said at last. “I have thought much about that, only my thinking hasn’t been so well ordered

¹ The incident recorded on that tomb was probably the fact on which Colonel John Hay founded his hero poem of “Jim Bludso.” — AUTHOR.

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as yours is. It has been only a girl's thinking."

"Tell me about it, will you not?" he asked persuasively. "I am disposed to respect the thinking of any sincere mind, and yours is sincere I know."

She did not recognize the compliment or make her bow to it in any conventional way. Obviously she was not a woman of experience in drawing-rooms. She simply answered:—

"Of course it is sincere. I don't know enough to think in any artificial way."

"Tell me the substance of it, please," he said again, persuasively.

"Well, when the war came, I was only seventeen years old, and we were living very happily, my father, my brothers, and I. Nobody was interfering with us that I could see, and nobody was interfering with anybody else, so far as I could hear. Of course if a lot of men had come to our house and tried to break into it, I should have understood that my father and my brothers ought to get their guns and repel the attack. But nothing of that kind was happen-

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ing anywhere, and so I could not see why people should grow excited and put on uniforms and set to work fighting each other.

“When I asked questions of that kind, I was told that I did not understand—that nations and states and communities were different from individuals or families. I tried to understand that, but I never could. I never could make out the difference. As nations and states and communities are composed only of individuals and families, I could not see wherein there was any real difference between the two cases. I knew that whenever my father had a business controversy with any other gentleman, he used to say :—

“‘Let us not quarrel about the matter. I want to do what is right, and I am sure you do. But we don’t agree as to what is right. Very well, we are both of us biassed. Let us ask some of our neighbors who are not biassed, to listen to both sides, and tell us what is right. And let us do the right.’ Almost always that settled the matter. But even when that failed, my father and the other man didn’t set to work

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to kill each other by way of adjusting the dispute. They brought suits—I think that is what they called it; at any rate they left it to the courts to say what was right, and whatever the court said they were compelled to do. I used to wonder why that wasn't a good way to decide things. I wondered why states and nations and communities couldn't in the same way ask some disinterested person to decide what was right, or failing that, why there shouldn't be some court to decide and to enforce its decision.

"I was laughed at a good deal for thinking in that way and so I quit talking about my thoughts. But after a while I decided that the trouble was that states and nations and communities didn't want to find out the right and do it, but were bent upon having their own way regardless of right or wrong. It was only childish thinking, of course, but I still can't see wherein it was wrong."

"Nor can I," the young man answered, "and for the simple reason that it wasn't wrong, but was, in the slang of our time, 'mighty right.'"

IX

AN EMOTIONAL CRISIS

AT breakfast the next morning Hugh Marvin was quick to discover that Gabrielle was in a mood of severe and distressing depression.

"You have not slept well," he said with a tenderness in his tone which very nearly undid all that the girl was doing to maintain her self-control.

"I have not slept at all," she answered, simply and frankly as any child might.

"But why not? Were you ill? or in pain?"

"No, not that. But what I had to tell you last night was—well, it was depressing."

"I can well understand that," he answered soothingly; "but all that is past now, and you must stop thinking of it. You must turn your face to the future."

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"There is no future for me," she answered. "That is what kept me awake—thinking of my position. You are very kind, and for the present I am living upon your bounty. I cannot go on doing that, and there seems to be no other way except for me to die. There is the river, and I have the creese, you know."

The young man rose, placed himself in front of the girl, and with mingled passion and deliberation said : —

"You have no right to say that, Gabrielle Latour, and you know it. I have given you no 'bounty,' as you call it. I have merely extended to you a hospitality which it is the privilege of a gentleman to offer to any woman—or to any man either for that matter—when there is occasion. When you say you are living upon my bounty, you wrong and insult me, and you very grievously hurt my feelings."

Without waiting for any answer, and without excusing the abruptness of his departure from the scarcely begun breakfast, he strode away.

The girl also quitted the breakfast table and

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retired to her room, where she wept for a time. After that she morally flagellated herself.

“He was entirely right,” she thought. “It was an insult to him for me to speak of his hospitality as his ‘bounty.’ He has made me an honored guest at his table. He has gone out of his way to anticipate my wants. He has shown me from the hour of our first meeting his eager desire to minister to my comfort and my welfare in every possible way. He even kept his boat at anchor after he had sent the others up the river, in the hope that he might return me to my friends if I had any. It was a cruel wrong and insult — what I said to him.”

After a little she went out into the steamer’s cabin, and called one of the attendants, asking him to bring her writing materials. When he did so, she addressed a note to Hugh Marvin and asked that it should be delivered to him at once. The note was in these words: —

“MY DEAR MR. MARVIN: This is to beg that you will forgive me. I did indeed do you wrong

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in what I said. I ought not to have done so, and I am very sorry. You are a generous man. Perhaps you are generous enough to forgive me. I am terribly nervous, and overwrought, and anxious. That is not an excuse, but only an explanation. I think I shall sleep, if you will send me word that I am forgiven. Then to-night, if you permit, I should like to talk to you about some plans I have been trying to form for the immediate future. May I sit with you on the guards to-night and tell you what I have been thinking?"

For reply, Marvin scribbled a note in pencil saying:—

"Sleep, by all means, and may you sleep well. I have nothing to forgive. If I had, the forgiveness would be freely yours. Let me explain. In such small care as I have been and am trying to take of you, I have merely been exercising a privilege. If that lost brother of yours who fell at Gettysburg were alive and had opportunity to minister to a sister of mine, he would very surely do all he could for her

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welfare. You know that, do you not? Then you must understand that in every service I am permitted to render you, I am only paying my obligation to the dead.

“Go to sleep now, and this evening we’ll see what is best to be done concerning your future.”

It is worthy of notice that instead of tearing up Gabrielle’s pathetic little note, as it was his habit to do with all but important business communications, Hugh Marvin carefully placed it in a breast pocketbook, whence he withdrew it several times that day to read it anew.

Every tender thought that connected itself with Gabrielle Latour seemed precious to this young man.

“There is a strange fascination about her,” he reflected. “I never knew anything like it before.”

But he did not introspectively analyze the matter. He was afraid to do that.

X

FOR THE FUTURE

WHEN the young man and young woman met again at the evening meal, — for Gabrielle had slept past the luncheon hour, — there was of necessity some constraint of manner on the part of each. An emotional crisis is apt to produce that effect, particularly when the emotion is mainly written into letters instead of being wrought into face-to-face speech. Upon meeting again, each of the parties to such a correspondence is embarrassed to know just how to begin relations anew, and each is conscious of the other's embarrassment as an additionally disturbing factor in the problem.

It was fortunate for these two, therefore, that their first meeting after their correspondence was at dinner. The presence of the

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waiter was a saving grace, and the little courtesies of the table gave them easy occasions for speech of an unemotional sort, thus avoiding the constrained silence which in such a case is the one thing most to be dreaded and avoided.

By the time that the meal was ended the wheels of intercourse were turning smoothly again, and so the meeting on the guards, half an hour or so later, was comparatively easy for both.

Gabrielle promptly took the conversation into her own control — fearing, perhaps, to intrust its guidance to clumsier masculine management.

“I want you to understand me, Mr. Marvin, and you please won’t misunderstand. You see I *must* look forward and plan a little. We shall finish this voyage within a few days, and — well, while I gratefully accept your hospitality so long as I am on board your boat, it will be different when the boat reaches its destination. I want to ask your advice about that. I have no money you know, and I know nobody at the North but you. Can you tell me how to get employment of some kind as soon as we land?

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I will do anything that I can, and I am stronger than you think. I would cook or scrub or wash — anything that's honest — ”

At that point Marvin, with something like a shudder, raised his hand in protest.

“Nothing of the kind will be necessary,” he interjected. “I have many friends in Cairo and St. Louis — ”

“Do you live in Cairo ?” she asked.

“I live wherever I happen to be — wherever my business calls me. But as I say, I have many friends in Cairo, among them one very dear friend, Mrs. Will Hallam. She is the wife of the richest man in the city, and she is a very gracious woman. With your consent I am going to place you with her for a time as her guest.”

“But that cannot be. I cannot be a dependant, a beggar! I will not. I must pay my own way. As I have no money, I must pay it with useful work of some kind.”

“Sit down, please,” he said, smiling, for the girl had risen in her excitement. “Let me tell you about this. Mrs. Will Hallam has four

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young children whom she very greatly wishes to educate. She is especially anxious that they shall learn French in the natural way by hearing and speaking that language from early childhood. I am rather closely in her confidence, perhaps because she happens to be my only sister, and I know that she is so concerned on this point that she has been planning to take the little people to France, which she doesn't want to do if she can avoid it. She has tried in vain to secure a nursery governess who really knows French and speaks it correctly. She will heap benedictions on my head if I can induce you to become an inmate of her house, but —"

He paused as if musing. Then he added :—

"I don't want her to pay you a salary. That is so much like wages, and I don't like to think of you as working for wages."

"But why should you care about that?"

"I don't know why, but somehow I do care. If you will allow me to say so, I have learned, brief as our acquaintance has been, to regard you—I think I can't explain it, but I'd rather—

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well, it would please me better if you wouldn't take wages from my sister, but just be her friend and — incidentally teach French to her children. It will be for a very little while, you know. The war is very near its end, and when it is over, you will own your father's property — the house in New Orleans, and the plantation on the bayou, and all the rest of it. In the meantime, if you'll permit me so far to interfere with your affairs, I think I can find some one who will advance money to you on your prospects."

"Are you planning to give me money, Mr. Marvin?" the girl asked with a dignity that approached indignation.

"No; oh, no!" he hastily protested. "Though I should be glad enough to do so if you permitted. You see you seem to be sole inheritor of a considerable property. Of course you can't administer it in any way or give any lien upon it till the estate is settled, but if I were free to offer it, I should think your promise to repay me when you come into possession an ample security for a loan. Pardon me!" seeing a flash

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in the girl's eyes, "I am not offering that ; I am only explaining. It seems to me that I might easily find some other business man, some man who doesn't personally know you, who would make the advance upon the same terms, on my assurance that — "

"That is to say you would borrow money for me, pledging yourself to pay in my stead if I fail to pay?"

"No, not exactly that, but — "

"It can never be so," she answered. Presently she added :—

"When we land at Cairo, I will let you take me to your sister's house if you choose, and I will remain there as her guest for a brief while — till I can find work. Is there a hospital there in which I might nurse?"

"There is an army general hospital at Mound City, a few miles above Cairo, on the Ohio. The head of it is one of the best men living, but there are only rough soldiers to nurse, and the work would not be fit for you. Besides, as a Southern young woman, you might not be acceptable there. The doctor is establishing

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a little city hospital in Cairo, under care of the Sisters of the Holy Cross — ”

“He is a Catholic then?”

“No, not at all. But he has learned to know the ladies of that sisterhood through their nursing work elsewhere, and so he has stood ready to join them and become their medical chief in the work they want to do at Cairo, where the need of such work is very pressing. However, there is no need to think of that just now. Let all that go till you are comfortably placed with my sister, and afterward we can all talk over plans together. You must go to bed now.”

The girl rose and left him without a word — without even saying “Good night.”

Perhaps she could not.

XI

THE WRATH OF EZRA BRASS

AFTER Gabrielle had gone, Hugh Marvin sat long upon the deck musing, planning, and in a wakeful way, dreaming. This young woman had come to mean more to him than any other woman had ever meant. He was always chivalrous in his attitude toward women, but that was in obedience to principle. It was not abstract principle that prompted him now, but a very tender impulse, the exact nature of which he did not at all realize. He could not bear the thought of her suffering in any way, especially suffering humiliation. He knew that his generous, warm-blooded sister, Mrs. Hallam, would welcome Gabrielle and make a cherished friend of her. But Gabrielle had shown him that she was too proud to be comfortable in any condi-

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tion of dependence. From a woman so rich as Mrs. Hallam was, she might feel free to accept mere hospitality, and might do so without soul discomfort. But she must have clothing and all the rest of it, and she would very certainly resent an offer on Mrs. Hallam's part to provide for her in that way, though Hugh Marvin smilingly pictured to himself the delight his sister would feel in having dressmakers in her house, and herself directing them in the task of making the most of so beautiful a girl.

He began now to appreciate Gabrielle's point of view and to sympathize with it. He felt that he did not want this young woman to be indebted even to the willing generosity of his sister for the clothes upon her back.

Presently, as he sat there thinking late into the night, an idea came to him. He went below, and with the aid of the boat hands, began pulling cotton bales about, carefully inspecting them. After a while he found some that were badly clay stained — having at some time or other been buried for purposes of concealment — and that had no marks upon their coverings.

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Selecting five of these bales he had them rolled to another part of the boat. Then he sent for a marking pot and brush, and with his own hands, by the light of a flaming torch, he painted upon each the letter "L," with a circle surrounding it.

The marking was too manifestly fresh to answer his purpose. After it dried, as it did in a brief while, as the lampblack was mixed only with turpentine, he secured a pail of water and some cotton waste. With the dampened waste he carefully wiped clay from other parts of the bales and smeared it over the markings, so that they might seem old and weather blurred.

When his work was done to his satisfaction, he returned to the deck with a wreath of smiles overspreading his countenance, and he sat there smoking in comfortable satisfaction until nearly morning. Finally he went to his bunk thoroughly pleased with his night's work.

Toward morning the boat landed at Memphis, where the other boats of the little fleet had been awaiting it for thirty-six hours.

Early in the morning, as the boat lay moored



ON THE INSTANT HUGH MARVIN SEIZED HIM BY THE THROAT
AND HURLED HIM OVERBOARD.

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to the levee, Ezra Brass came aboard, and this time Marvin permitted his visit. The young man was in such good humor with his night's work and with the solution he had found of the difficulties with which he had been wrestling, that even Ezra Brass's presence did not excite his anger. But presently Ezra Brass did.

After a few minutes' conversation on the lower deck, which had no guard-rails, Brass turned to Marvin and said:—

“It has cost us a pretty penny to wait here and pay wharfage on all the boats while you dallied down the river there. But I was young myself once, and seeing that there was a lady in the case—”

On the instant Hugh Marvin seized him by the throat and hurled him overboard. The current was strong, and the water was cold, coming as it did from the melting snows of the mountains that bound the Mississippi valley on the east and west, but Brass could swim, and so Hugh Marvin had no concern for his ultimate safety. He did not order the lowering of a boat, and when some one of his subordi-

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nates suggested that course, he vetoed the proposal.

"Let him take his cold ducking," he replied. "He'll swim ashore a little way down the levee, and perhaps his manners and his morals will be improved by the experience."

Brass did swim ashore after a severe chilling. He went to his own boat, filled himself full of hot drinks, and went to bed. In the meanwhile, the stores of all the boats having been replenished, Hugh Marvin ordered all of them to cast off and proceed up the river. He did not see Brass again during the sixty hours or so of the voyage up to Cairo.

Brass, as soon as he got warm, fell into a rage and began planning revenge. With the indiscretion of drink, to which he was not accustomed, he wrote and tore up several vituperative letters to his subordinate, threatening him with all sorts of pains and penalties. As he got sober and thought better of it before there was a chance to send any of these missives, they did no harm to anybody.

As he recovered his senses, he began to plan

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his revenge in more rational but still impracticable ways. At one time he decided to prosecute Marvin criminally for assault and battery. But then came the reflection that the assault was committed in Tennessee, and that Marvin would be in Illinois before he could get at him. Moreover, a Tennessee jury would pretty certainly hold the assault to have been justified, if Marvin should tell what had provoked it.

So Brass tried to think of some other plan, and several that at first seemed feasible were abandoned on the ground that "the young feller knows too much." For while this expedition had been organized for the purpose of buying cotton from the planters and bringing it North as was at that time permitted by the government as a matter of good policy and humanity, Ezra Brass had not hesitated to take cotton without buying it, when he found it up lonely creeks and bayous. Some of the cotton thus taken belonged to the United States government and bore United States identification marks upon the bales. Brass had carefully seen to the removal of

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these marks, but he could not know how far his doings might be known or hereafter become known to Hugh Marvin. He knew only that the government was apt to be a relentless prosecutor if the facts should be discovered, and so on the whole he decided after a day's meditation to let Hugh Marvin alone for the present and treat the whole matter of the impromptu bath as a jest.

"But my time will come some day," he said, compressing his lips, "and I'll git my chance to git even with that young feller."

Only one thing seriously annoyed him. He could not afford to quarrel with Marvin in any way serious enough to make a final break. In that new expedition which he was planning, he felt that he simply could not dispense with the young man's services and sagacity.

"I'll have to make him almost rich to get him," he reflected bitterly, "but it's got to be. Without him the whole thing would go to pot."

So the wily old speculator pocketed his wrath, for the time at least, and reconciled himself to the inevitable.

XII

“LYING LIKE A GENTLEMAN”

IT was not until afternoon that Marvin spoke to Gabrielle of the cotton bales. Then he did so cautiously, fearing to blunder into some betrayal of his secret.

“You told me the other evening,” he said, “that your aunt had some cotton bales buried on the bayou bank, or near it?”

“Yes,” she replied, “but somebody dug them up and carried them away.”

“How long was that before you and I met each other?”

“Only a day or two. At least I discovered the loss only when I went back to the swamp after burying my aunt.”

“How many bales were there?”

“Five.”

“And each was marked with the letter ‘L’ with a circle around it?”

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“Yes, that was always our mark.”

The young man paused a minute or so, as if thinking. Then suddenly he said:—

“You understand, of course, that the general purpose of this expedition has been perfectly honest. We are permitted by the government to trade in a restricted way with the people of the low country, in order that they may have something to live on, and in order that the North’s great need of cotton for its mills may be met. We are not restricted to trade strictly within the region controlled by Northern troops, but are permitted to go pretty much anywhere we can, and buy cotton there. But sometimes it happens that our men find cotton for which they can find no owner. My orders have been very strict that all such cotton should be left where found, and that none should be taken on board any of the steamers except such as had been bought and paid for. But you understand how difficult it has been for me to secure strict obedience to any orders in this respect, especially as I have had to go away in my canoe in search of cotton to buy. Often I have been

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absent from the steamboats for several days at a time, and I fear that in my absence the men have sometimes taken cotton that hadn't been bought.”

“Of course that would happen sometimes,” answered the girl, wondering why he was so carefully explaining all these things to her.

“Yes, of course. But I am not only in command of this expedition, I have my money invested in it. I am a partner in the enterprise, and I want you to know that I have had no part or lot in anything that isn't entirely honest. If there has been any stealing of cotton, the enterprise must gain by it, and I must share the gain. I have done all I could to prevent stealing, and in several instances I have compelled restitution when I have found out about such things.”

“Mr. Marvin,” interjected the girl, “do you imagine for one moment that I could suspect you of any dishonorable practice? Why do you tell me of these things?”

“Come with me,” he said, “and I will show you why.”

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With that he led the way to the main deck, the girl walking beside him. He led her to the five cotton bales which he had marked and separated from all the rest.

"See!" he said. "I have been going over our cargo and I have found these five bales. You will observe that they are mud-stained, and that they are marked with the letter 'L' enclosed in a circle. There are just five of them, and there isn't another bale on board that carries that mark. Come! Let us go back to the boiler deck."

The girl was in a daze. This was a piece of good fortune of which her fancy could never have dreamed.

When the two were seated again, Marvin said:—

"This discovery is a joyous one to me. It completely releases you from all possible dependence upon anybody."

"You are very good," she answered. "But you can never know or imagine how much this means to me. What were the bales worth, there on the bayou?"

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“Oh, anywhere from five to fifty dollars apiece. Probably fifty dollars, if we had bought them.”

“How much would that be for the five?”

“Two hundred and fifty dollars. But what has that to do with the matter? We did not buy those bales of you on the bayou, and so the bayou price has nothing to do with the matter. Whoever buys that cotton will buy it at Cairo, where it is worth about eight hundred dollars a bale, or about four thousand dollars in all. If you will leave the business to me, I'll sell the cotton for you and hand you the proceeds. Then you needn't feel yourself a dependent upon anybody. But you will stay with my sister as her guest, of course. She will rejoice to have you, and as you are now able to pay for your own gowns and bonnets, you will feel no humiliation in letting her enjoy her favorite pastime of superintending the construction of a young woman's outfit, and going shopping with the young woman for those things that must be bought. She does that for all the nice girls in the town. When any

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one of them must have a new gown made, she orders the girl, in her pleasant, 'fetching' way, to come to her. At the same time she sends for the dressmaker, and it is her delight to tyrannize over that unfortunate personage until every line of the gown is to her liking and every seam to her satisfaction. I've often had to lunch alone in her house because a skirt didn't 'sit' properly, or because a bit of lace or silk or a little bow of ribbon didn't satisfy her whimsical majesty. When that sort of thing happened, she would order the carriage, and she and the girl would drive together to all the shops, and very nearly plague the life out of all the salesmen until the fastidious taste of this my sister was satisfied. Upon my soul, I think the salesmen liked it. You see Lida—that's my pet name for my sister—is so genial and cordial and full of jollity that the shop people enjoy dealing with her. I never went shopping with her but once, and then I came away satisfied that every young jackanapes among them knew from the beginning what she wanted, but held it back as long as possible

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in order to prolong the pleasure of ‘trading’ with her. Oh, I’m sure you’ll fall in love with that sister of mine, and I *know* she’ll fall in love with you.”

The young man was on the point of adding something about the comeliness of the young woman’s figure and the delight his sister would feel in “making the most of it,” but he wisely refrained. He said instead, “You must know that this sister of mine is not in the least like me. She has a laughing demon in her. She sees the fun in everything and enjoys every point in the game. She can be serious upon proper occasions, but she doesn’t find many such occasions, thank God. Life wears a smiling face to her. She and her children are the best of sworn comrades. I have seen the four of them swarming over her at once—one in her lap, one on each arm of her rocking-chair with heads nestling close to her cheeks, and one climbing up the back of the chair to claim what he called an ‘upsy down kiss,’ and she would be ‘jolly’ each of them in turn, crying out to the boy, as he climbed over the back

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of her chair, nearly upsetting her, 'Give a fellow a chance, John!' and protesting to the three swarming girls that 'we'll all have to go to the rag-bag together, if you don't go away and let me finish my sewing.' But I never knew one of them to go away upon such remonstrance. Don't you think it is to a woman's credit when her children love her in that way?"

"It means more than that," the girl answered. "Children who have such a mother will never go very far astray. I am sure I shall love your sister, now that I can go to her without feeling myself a pauper. And how I shall delight in teaching those little people to speak French!"

With that the girl, relieved now of all that incubus of dependence which had so heavily weighed upon her spirit, literally waltzed away, singing a joyous little French chanson as she went.

"It involved something closely akin to lying," thought Hugh Marvin, as he saw her recede from view and remembered the fiction of the cotton

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bales, “but at any rate it was ‘lying like a gentleman’ and for an altogether good purpose. I’m glad I did it, and I’m especially glad I got through with it so well.”

XIII

A "BUSINESS" CONFERENCE

OF course the five bales of cotton which Hugh Marvin had taken out of his cargo and made the property of Gabrielle Latour belonged to the general venture. There was nothing for him to do, therefore, as an honest man, but report his appropriation of them on arrival at Cairo, and have their selling value — about four thousand dollars — charged against his share of the profits of the expedition. He was glad enough to do this although it involved a very considerable reduction of his profit from the enterprise, and he was not yet a rich man. In truth, he would willingly have given up, not only all his profits from this expedition, but all else that he had in the world, if

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that had been necessary to save Gabrielle from humiliation and distress.

When he thought the matter over and realized this, he for the first time recognized the fact that he loved Gabrielle Latour as he had never imagined himself capable of loving any woman on earth.

"I have fifty or sixty thousand to the good now," he reflected, as he thought the matter over, "and I would willingly give up every dollar of it just to spare Gabrielle a moment's embarrassment; I suppose that means that I love her. I hadn't thought of that, and it seems absurd in view of the slightness and brevity of our acquaintance. But it is a fact, nevertheless. I would impoverish myself for her sake even if there were no remotest prospect of winning her to be my wife, which I mean to do if I can."

Then he thought jealously of the chances of that. He was troubled by the reflection that the girl's attitude toward him seemed to be one of reverence and gratitude rather than any more encouraging one. He had begun by pitying the sorely beset young woman, and it is

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true that "pity is akin to love," but gratitude is not, and, so far as the youth could discover, it was only gratitude that she felt for him. Perhaps he was not a shrewd observer; certainly he was not learned in woman's ways. If he had been so learned, he might have found evidence of something other and better than gratitude in those outbreaks of anger and resentment on Gabrielle's part which had given him so much pain. Gratitude does not prompt anger and resentment. It does not set pride in arms or awaken supersensitiveness to self-defence. Love does so always, even when love is not yet recognized by the one feeling it.

But we have to do now with affairs. When Marvin reported to his partners his appropriation of five carefully selected bales and asked that their value at Cairo might be deducted from his share of the expedition's profits, Ezra Brass's curiosity was aroused. He wondered why Marvin had done this thing, and he was not long in finding out. He learned from the steamboat men how Marvin had hunted for clay-stained and unmarked bales; how he had

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marked them by night with his own hands ; how he had then carefully smeared clay stains over the markings by way of destroying their newness of appearance and making them seem old instead. A little further inquiry informed him that the bales in question had been sold for the account of Gabrielle Latour, and the proceeds deposited to her credit in Hallam's bank.

Ezra Brass valued himself upon knowing well "how to put two and two together" with confidence in the result of the addition. So he hugged the information he had secured and cherished it for future use. "My time will come," he thought. "I'll git even with that there young feller yit ; I must wait awhile, but I'll git there in the end."

In the meanwhile, however, he felt it to be very necessary to secure Hugh Marvin's services for the new expedition he was planning, and as he had not been very fortunate of late in his endeavors to converse with the young man, he decided to have a little meeting of those of the men interested with him who happened

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to be in Cairo at the time, and to have another instead of himself summon Hugh Marvin to the conference.

The meeting was held one evening in the parlor of the bank presided over by Napoleon Tandry, or "Napper Tandry" as he was more generally called, and it was Tandry who asked Marvin to be present. He had wanted Ezra Brass to send the invitation, but Brass had answered:—

"That there young feller is a good deal of a buzz-saw lately, and I prefer not to monkey with buzz-saws myself. He won't listen to anything I say. It'll be a good deal better fer you to sort o' play first fiddle in this thing. So you ask him."

"Well, if he is hard to manage, suppose we leave him out of it altogether."

"Oh, but we can't do without him," answered Brass, with emphasis. "He ain't afeard o' nothin'. All the devils can't scare him, and he knows how to find more cotton in a morning than all the rest of us could find in a week. There ain't nothin' the matter with him, only

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he's sentimental like, and fanciful. You see when he went into business he hadn't a carpet-bag to put his clothes into, and now he'd cut up for fifty or sixty thousand, — possibly eighty or a hundred thousand, — so he's sort o' feelin' his oats, as they say of a frisky horse, and he particularly don't approve of me. Him and me has had some hot words lately. But we've simply got to git him to manage this thing or it'll go to the bow-wows."

So Napper Tandry sent a very suave note to Hugh Marvin, asking him to "attend a little conference of business men for the discussion of a proposed enterprise which seems to present peculiar opportunities for profit." And Hugh Marvin attended.

It was Napper Tandry who first set forth the plan of the expedition, subject at every third sentence to some correction from the real originator of the scheme, Ezra Brass.

"We propose, gentlemen," said Tandry, "to send a cotton-buying fleet up a certain Southern river, where the supplies of cotton are very great."

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"How far up?" asked young Marvin, when told what river it was.

"All the way up," answered the other. "You see there is not only a world of cotton to be bought there, but there is still more that belongs to the Rebel government, and that we can take without buying it at all."

Marvin sat still, saying nothing.

"It's the biggest thing on ice," continued Tandry. "It spells a big fortune for every man who is permitted to participate in it. Now what do you say, gentlemen? What sums will each of you invest in the enterprise?"

"May I ask a question or two?" asked Hugh Marvin.

"Certainly, Mr. Marvin; we want you with us, of course, and we are prepared, I think, gentlemen," — everybody nodded approval, — "to allow you, in view of your activity and acumen, double the share of profits that your investment in the enterprise would call for. We value your services more than your money, Mr. Marvin."

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"Thank you for your good opinion," said Hugh. "But now for my questions. Do you know that the Rebels are up in that country with strong military forces?"

"We know all that," answered Ezra Brass, who could not long be discreet enough to let Tandry manage the affair. "We know all that; but, you see, we've arranged to be masters of the situation. We've 'let in' a general who has twenty or thirty or forty thousand troops under his command, and we've 'let in' a prominent naval officer. I'm naming no names, because this thing is confidential, but when we send our fleet up the river, it will be on a 'joint account' in which the general and the naval officer are partners for all they are worth. When our boats go up the river, they will be accompanied by a fleet of gunboats in the stream, and by an army on shore, quite able to take care of all the Rebels there. We'll have nothin' to do but scoop in the cotton."

"You mean then that you have corrupted a general and a high officer of the navy to

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help you in a gigantic cotton-stealing expedition?" asked Marvin.

"It ain't stealin'," answered Brass, ignoring the reference to corruption. "You see most of that cotton up there has been bought by the Rebel government, and we're simply agoin' to capture it."

"But," answered Marvin, who spoke without the least excitement and in persuasively level tones that completely deceived his audience, "if the cotton belongs to the Confederate government, and is captured by an expedition under a Union general and assisted by a Union naval fleet, it must all belong to the United States government, must it not?"

"Well, you see, we've arranged all that with the officers in command of the army and fleet," answered Brass, hurriedly. "This thing is done on joint account, and both the general and the naval commander are silent partners in it."

Hugh Marvin stood up, and with an unusually elaborate courtesy said:—

"As I am not yet prepared to turn thief, I

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beg to withdraw from this —" he hesitated, and then added "den. I will have no part in this enterprise of plunder and robbery of the government. Good night!"

And with that he withdrew.

XIV

A FAILURE OF NEGOTIATIONS

HUGH MARVIN had been somewhat astonished upon entering that conference of speculators to find John Land among them.

John Land was a man twenty-eight years old or so, six feet two in height, and perfectly well proportioned. He had a head that would have attracted the statuary's attention instantly, and a form that accorded with the head. His face was handsome in an extraordinary degree, and his carriage was that of a king or a conqueror. He had a smiling countenance and an optimistic manner that would have inspired instant confidence in any stranger. In person he was a cross between Apollo and Hercules, and in his bearing he was a combination of the frank, free-hearted boy with the skilled and experienced diplomatist.

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But there was nothing in John Land's history to support his appearance or his manner, or to account for his presence in such a company of capitalists as this. Hugh Marvin knew, or thought he knew, all about the young man's career. He had come to Cairo a year or so before the time we are now considering. He had entered Hallam's service as a petty clerk on the levee, charged with no more important duties than the counting of barrels, bags, or bales, as they were passed from the shore to lading steamboats or from unlading steamboats to the shore.

Slowly — far more slowly than would have been the case if the sagacious Captain Will Hallam had fully trusted him — he had risen to the post of shipping clerk in the Hallam service. Then suddenly he had left that service for reasons known only to Captain Hallam and himself. It was one of Captain Hallam's rules, as he picturesquely put it, "never to bother with a bad tooth after it is extracted." So Captain Hallam never told anybody why he had dispensed with the services of John

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Land, and John Land offered no explanation to anybody. Another of Captain Hallam's rules of conduct was "never to advertise my losses even if the fellow gets away with the combination of my safe."

Up to the time when Hugh Marvin had gone South in charge of the expedition whose work was just finished, John Land had certainly had no money. He had brought none to Cairo. He had never earned more than a clerk's salary while in the Hallam service, and he had lived much too expensively to have accumulated anything by saving; nevertheless, he was one of this company of capitalists gathered to plan a very costly expedition, and a day or two later Hugh Marvin learned that he was investing a good many thousands of dollars in the venture.

The information came from John Land himself, and this was the way of it. When Hugh Marvin quitted the conference in disgust, it was the general sentiment of the little group that by some means or other his coöperation simply must be secured. Ezra Brass, who

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knew more about the business than anybody else, was particularly insistent upon this necessity.

"I don't like the feller for a cent," he said, "but I tell you, gentlemen, that if we don't git him with us, we'll go to pot. I've been along with several of these here expeditions, and none o' the rest of you has. I *know* what is necessary to success in 'em, an' I tell you the first figger in the sum is Hugh Marvin. You kin potter around up an' down them there bayous and rivers and creeks till the cows come home, and never git enough cotton to plug up your ears with, and you're likely to get your steamboats sunk into the bargain. If you've got Hugh Marvin, you'll get cotton. He's got a nose for it as keen as a hound's for rabbits, and I tell you he ain't afraid to go after it neither. He'll snoop around and take the resks where nobody else would think of darin' to ventur'. I tell you we must git him. I s'pose he's sort o' standin' out fer a bigger price. I had to pay him ten thousand out o' the general fund for this last trip, to say

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nothin' of his interest in the proceeds o' the transaction. But he was wuth it all an' more, twice over. I've an idea that our best plan will be to git Mr. Land to see him an' talk things over with him, an' then offer him a flat twenty-five thousan' as a salary fer his services, an' at the same time let him put his money in along with ours on the ground floor like. That's the only way we kin git him, an' we'd as well reconcile ourselves with the environment, as the fox said when the hounds was a-barkin' in a circle all around him."

The "sense of the meeting" seemed to accord with Ezra Brass's suggestion, and so it came about that John Land — suave, smooth, plausible, and full of persuasiveness — called upon Hugh Marvin the next day.

The conference resulted in nothing, except in acquainting Hugh Marvin with the fact that John Land had suddenly become possessed of more money than Marvin believed he could ever have acquired honestly. He ended the interview at last by saying to Land:—

"Tell the gentlemen for whom you are act-

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ing that I will not accompany their cotton-stealing expedition on any terms they can offer. Say to them that they haven't money enough and never will have money enough to tempt me into such an enterprise. You may put it strongly without the least fear of exaggeration. You may say to them that I wouldn't go in charge of their expedition if they were to offer me all the cotton they get and all the steamboats that carry it, as the price of my services. Now go, and don't come bothering me any further about a business with which I will have nothing whatever to do. Go! I say!"

And he held the door open till Land had passed through it, after which he suddenly slammed it and double locked it as if in fear that the man might return.

For the sake of historical completeness it may as well be recorded here that the expedition went upon its mission; that it secured very little cotton for the speculators; that the army sent for its protection was so badly broken and beaten that on its return it had

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to hug all the bends of the river by way of keeping itself under protection of the gun-boats that were also engaged in escorting the expeditionary fleet.

The ledgers of the commercial firm which organized the enterprise showed at its conclusion a heavy loss to pretty nearly everybody concerned except the naval officer, the field general, and the office general in Washington who had made themselves responsible for its conduct. These three had been guaranteed their profits by the speculators in any case, and the speculators, with a finer sense of honor than might have been expected in such a case, paid over those profits, themselves pocketing the losses.

XV

AN EPISODE OF INKSTANDS

HUGH MARVIN had not lived much in Cairo. He had lived, as he said to Gabrielle Latour, wherever his business had called him.

He had rather avoided Cairo in fact. His brother-in-law, Captain Will Hallam, had established himself there some years before and had quickly become a dominant force in the commerce of the West. If Hugh Marvin had been a man of the ordinary sort, he would have gone to Cairo, where the prosperous and over-busy husband of his sister could and would have given him, not only employment, but every opportunity, also, for the advancement of his fortunes. But Hugh Marvin was eccentric. He had a strong desire to build up his fortunes, but he had no mind to have them built up by

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anybody else. He had nothing to start with, but he resolutely declined to ask anything from anybody's favor.

So instead of going to Cairo, he had gone to St. Louis. There he had secured employment at the lowest possible wages. This had slowly developed into employment of a better kind at higher wages. The young man had realized from the first that, in commerce and in affairs, money to work with is the most essential tool of the trade. He learned to know many old shipping clerks, bookkeepers, and the like, who had been all their lives faithfully drudging in the service, but who, after all those years of work, had not a dollar that they could call their own.

Why were not these men independent merchants? he asked himself. Why were they not engaged in commerce on their own account, instead of being the inadequately salaried servants of other men?

The answer was ready to his hand. These men had not saved anything out of their earnings. The fact was not greatly to their discredit, perhaps, seeing that their earnings were

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so small and that most of them were married men with families to maintain. But the fact carried a lesson to Hugh Marvin's mind. He saw clearly that most of the independent merchants about him were in no moral or mental way the superiors of the men they were hiring at small wages to conduct their business for them. The difference lay only in the fact that the independent merchants—many of them very shaky in their credit—had begun by getting a few thousands ahead as a capital with which to work, while the clerks to whom they paid wages were accustomed to spend their earnings as fast as they received them and to have nothing at the end of the month.

Hugh Marvin was quick to comprehend a lesson of this character. Small as his wage was at that time, he determined to save half of it, and he did so. He hunted up another young man like-minded with himself, and joining forces, they two rented for next to nothing a little room in a warehouse, which otherwise would have waited long for a tenant. They put into it a bed, a washstand of cheap construction,

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two inexpensive chairs, a pine table, and nothing else. They took their meals at cheap eating houses along the levee, — rarely spending more than ten cents for any meal, — and so at the end of a year, Hugh Marvin had a small working capital, to which he added rapidly, for the reason that, thanks to his industry, capacity, and devotion to duty, his salary had been increased several fold, while his living expense had not been increased at all.

Then Hugh Marvin had begun a career of his own, and he had begun it badly by taking employment from Ezra Brass at a much smaller wage than the work and the man deserved. He had soon discovered that mistake, however, and had corrected it. He accurately estimated the value of his services to Brass, and he insisted upon being paid accordingly. More important still, when these cotton-buying expeditions were undertaken, and he saw how indispensable his services were to their success, he forced Brass to give him a partner's interest in the ventures.

Thus, within a comparatively brief while,

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Hugh Marvin had secured the tools of mercantile success.

Now had come to him the opportunity to secure wealth quickly. For he saw clearly how he could, with ease and certainty, make the proposed expedition successful in a sufficient degree to secure for himself a very large money return over and above the twenty-five-thousand-dollar salary offered him by Brass and his associates.

This opportunity he had deliberately thrown away upon the same principle that prompts an honest man to refrain from robbing a till when it lies temptingly open and there is nobody at hand to interfere.

But having declined to engage in further service with Brass, Hugh Marvin must find something else to do. He had a good working capital now, and so he decided to set up a commission and forwarding business of his own at Cairo.

How far the fact of Gabrielle's presence in Cairo determined him in the selection of the little Illinois city as the scene of his further

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activities, it would probably have puzzled even himself to determine. However that may have been, he set up an office and a warehouse and a wharf boat there, sent his circulars broadcast to shippers all over the land—to men at the North who had grain or meats or flour to sell South, and to men at the South who had cotton to market at the North. His acquaintance being wide and his reputation high, he was soon in possession of a business that employed dozens of clerks and scores of lesser helpers.

Soon after the great cotton-stealing expedition started, —for John Land did not risk his personal safety by going with it, —John Land went to Marvin, proposing to put money into the young man's business, to become a partner in it, and to enlarge it in many ways that were open to him.

Under ordinary circumstances Hugh Marvin was an extremely courteous person, delicately considerate of other people's feelings. But under certain circumstances he was apt to trample upon the feelings of other people with hob-nailed boots, grinding the heels thereof

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into the very faces of his victims. That was because he had no toleration in that clean soul of his for any form of dishonesty, and further because he had no sense of fear to restrain him from speaking the thought that was in him, so soon as he knew that thought to be based upon fact.

So when John Land proposed to "put money into the business," Hugh Marvin quietly asked :—

"Whose money?"

"Why, my own, of course."

"Where did you get it?"

"Why, I have made it in business, of course."

"Might I inquire what particular kind of dishonest business you have been engaged in while I have been away?"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Land, rising to his full height and advancing as if to intimidate the young Kentuckian.

"Pray be seated," answered Hugh Marvin, "and preserve whatever you can of calmness. We can discuss matters better in that way."

Land subsided into his chair as if Marvin

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had physically forced him to do so. Then Marvin said :—

“You see it is all very simple. I have been away less than two months. When I went away you were in the employ of my brother-in-law, Captain Will Hallam, at a small salary. You were living much more expensively than your salary justified. You were —”

“My personal expenditures are none of your business, Hugh Marvin,” interrupted the other.

“Ordinarily,” answered Marvin, lolling back in his office chair, “that would be perfectly true. But when you come to me proposing to make of yourself my partner in business, with all the power that a partner has to ruin his associates, I have both the right and the duty to inquire into all matters that tend to illustrate your character.”

“I will talk with you no further,” interrupted Land. “Your brother-in-law, Will Hallam, has prejudiced you against me.”

“It is of no consequence,” said Marvin, “but as a more or less interesting matter of fact I

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may truthfully state that my brother-in-law, Captain Will Hallam, has never mentioned your name within my hearing."

"Then you got your information from that cat, his wife."

Instantly, Hugh Marvin flung an inkstand into the man's face, and he followed up the assault so vigorously that before Land reached the bottom of the stairs in his hurried retreat, there wasn't an inkstand left on any of the dozen or so desks in Hugh Marvin's office.

During this little skirmish Hugh Marvin had spoken no word, either by way of expletive or otherwise. It was his habit to say nothing when he was engaged in doing things.

When all was over, he turned to the office boy and very quietly said:—

"You'd better go down to Blelock's and get some inkstands. Be a little bit in a hurry, please, as these gentlemen at the desks are waiting for an opportunity to write."

In the meanwhile young Land, who had rather prematurely attired himself that spring day in a suit of white duck, with a full-bosomed

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bishop's-lawn shirt, hurried to his hotel, avoiding observation so far as that was possible. But enough people saw his ink-bedraggled presentment to make it certain that some part of the story would become known to Ezra Brass. That astute person, as soon as he heard of the affair, chuckled audibly. It promised him an opportunity and an ally in the matter of "getting even."

XVI

FRENCH AND HORSESHOES

DURING all this time Hugh Marvin's relations with Gabrielle Latour had in no way changed for the better as he regarded the better. He saw much of her, and in pleasant ways, but so far as his acumen could make out, it was still only gratitude that she felt for him — not love in the lover's sense of that word.

He was too conscientious a business man to give up to his own or other people's pleasure any of the hours that he felt himself bound to devote to the interests of those clients of his, all over the country, who intrusted their commercial affairs to him as a commission merchant. If he did not usually appear in his office before eight o'clock in the morning, though he required his clerks to be at their desks at seven,

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and if sometimes he postponed his appearance there until nine, it was only because the time between seven and nine brought with it nothing of business that required his personal attention. He employed competent young men as his clerks, paying them the wages of competent men, and they had no need of his instructions in the early morning hours, which were wholly given up to clerical work in settlement of the preceding day's activities.

Once or twice a week, indeed, Hugh Marvin was apt to be in the office very early — before seven. But that was for the sake of discipline. As nobody in the office could ever know on what morning or at what moment he might make one of these early appearances, every clerk in his employ felt it to be a matter of personal interest to be at his desk when the clock struck seven.

As the business involved the shipment of freight in large quantities by steamboats, and as steamboats were quite as apt to arrive during the night as at any other time, Hugh Marvin's office was never closed. There were certain

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of the clerks, and especially the shipping clerks, who must be at their desks throughout the night. It frequently happened, therefore, that Hugh Marvin visited the office at one, two, or three o'clock in the morning.

In brief, here was the typical man of business, who kept his eye and hand upon the affairs under his control without making himself a slave to his own routine.

He allowed himself a good deal of leisure, though he did not take that leisure at any stated time or at anything like regular intervals. When he left his office, whether by day or by night, nobody there could guess when he would enter it again. It might be that he would come back within the quarter hour, or he might not appear again during the next twenty-four hours. On one occasion he made a business trip of a week's duration to New York, and nobody in his office knew, until he returned, that he had been absent from the city.

Sometimes, late in the summer afternoons, he would mount his horse,—for, Kentuckian that he was, he always kept a steed in waiting

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as his only means of locomotion, — and gallop to his sister's beautiful home, far up-town, there to engage in a game of croquet on the lawn, or a romping frolic with his little nephew and nieces. At any rate it was for such sake that he persuaded himself that these visits were paid.

Gabrielle had by this time become completely domesticated in the house. She and Marvin's sister, Mrs. Hallam, had become the most devoted of friends, and as for the children, their affection for Gabrielle had begun well-nigh to rival their devotion to their fascinating mother. And Gabrielle had changed in many ways also. She had lost the pallor and the sunken-eyed appearance that had at first awakened the pity of Hugh Marvin. Now that she was again with people about her whom she could love, and especially now that she no longer felt herself the recipient of charity from any source, she had become happy again, in spite of the gentle melancholy that survived concerning the death of those that had been nearest and dearest to her in her own child-

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hood. Happiness had wrought its broidery upon her countenance, making her, Hugh Marvin thought, more beautiful than ever. Her step had taken on a new elasticity. All her motions, while still preserving the languorous ease and grace of the South, were quickened and vivified.

A certain little rippling laugh that had been crushed out of her soul at the time when Hugh Marvin had first met her had now come back, and it seemed fascinating, not only to him, but to all others who came into contact with the girl. It was hardly a laugh. It bore no resemblance to a giggle. It was merely a sort of ripple of joyousness that pervaded her speech, the echo of gladness within her soul.

Nothing that Hugh Marvin had learned to love in her had gone from her, or in the least diminished. Her soft, rich, contralto voice continued to be music in all ears that listened, and her Southern accent, emphasized a bit by her lifelong habit of speaking French about half the time, was a fascination. Add that little half-laughing ripple, which could be instantly

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altered upon occasion to an expression of ineffable tenderness and sympathy, and it is no wonder that all who came into contact with Gabrielle Latour fell to loving her, and could not help themselves.

In the transformation, or the restoration rather, which had thus been wrought by her new environment, Gabrielle had lost none of her old honesty of purpose, none of her old fearless frankness of thought and utterance. It had been her practice to talk with the children in nothing but French, and, after they had acquired facility, she permitted them to use only that tongue in converse with her. If one of them so far forgot as to address her in English, she would look at the child as if not understanding, and wonderingly ask in French: "What is it that you say to me, dear?"

In accordance with the habit thus bred, one of the children one day addressed Hugh Marvin in French. He knew enough of French to reply in that tongue with what might be called the blue-grass accent. Instantly Gabrielle said to him:—

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"Oh, but you must not do that, Mr. Marvin. You must not address the child in your very badly pronounced French. You will corrupt her ear and sadly mislead her."

It was the teacher in her that prompted that utterance. Something else in her prompted her to blush violently, and to offer a staggering apology.

"I beg that you will not apologize," said Hugh, seeing her confusion. "You are perfectly right. My French is such as was taught me in school. I suppose I might manage somehow to make my wants known with it if I were in France, and if I spoke only to gently considerate people. But now that you are teaching these youngsters to speak French with a pure accent, it is certainly very desirable that I should not corrupt their ears or debauch their understandings by indulging in such jargon as I have at command."

Then, instantly, and as if to avoid a pause and avert a further apology, the young man broke into another subject.

"My sister tells me," he said, "that you

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are a very early riser, as I have observed that most Southern young women are."

"Yes," she answered eagerly. "It seems to me too bad to waste the superb early morning in bed. I love the sunrise and the dew, and above all, the odors of the dawn. I am always ready to say 'Good morning' to the sun when it shows itself above the horizon."

"But at this time of year the sun rises about half-past four."

"A little later this month," she answered. "But I am out of bed at four,—the moment daylight begins to show itself,—and so I am always ready to meet the sun as soon as he has had his bath in the dew."

"Early rising is one of the good habits of Southern young women," he said. "Another is a love of horseback riding. I wonder if you have that also."

"Oh, yes!" she answered with enthusiasm. "All my life I have loved the saddle. Even as a little child I was accustomed to ride. In New Orleans I used to ride with my father to Lake Pontchartrain, or down the river

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half a dozen miles, every morning. When I was in Paris, I rode in the Bois every day, though the good mother of the convent thought it a sinful self-indulgence. On the plantation I almost lived upon horseback until all the horses were taken away to serve in the army."

"Good!" the young man cried. "Then you know how to ride a horse that has some spirit?"

"I think I can ride any horse," she answered, not with a boastful tone, but merely as one who states a simple fact.

"Good again!" said he. "If you will do me the honor to ride with me,—you see I ride every morning before breakfast,—I will call for you at as nearly sunrise as may be. Then we'll greet the morning together. There are really good roads and bridle-paths around Cairo when one knows where to find them."

"But what about horses?" asked the girl.

"I'm a Kentuckian, you know," he said in reply. "I'm rather given to the keeping

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of such horses as I need, and I'll bring for your use about the most beautiful mare you ever saw. She's a light bay, — just off the sorrel, — seventeen hands high, perfectly formed, and with a coat as smooth and glossy as satin. She is as full of spirit as the sunrise itself, but utterly without vices or ill tempers."

Such is human veracity! Every word that Hugh Marvin had spoken was perfectly true. Yet he had purposely conveyed the impression that he already owned the beautiful animal which he intended to dedicate to Gabrielle's service. In fact he had been for a week in fruitless negotiation for her. He had not bought her, partly because he had had no real need of her for his own use, and partly because the dealer who had her for sale asked what Hugh Marvin deemed an extravagant price for her.

There is so great a difference between truth and mere fact that perhaps we may justly hold the young man guiltless of prevarication in this instance. As a matter of mere fact, Hugh Mar-

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vin did not own the loftily pedigreed mare that he wanted Gabrielle Latour to ride the next morning; but as a matter of living truth, he intended to own her before the next morning should come. It amounted, he thought, to the same thing, and perhaps it did.

To the end that he might own her, he took a hasty leave and went at once to the stable of the dealer.

That astute personage saw at a glance that the young man had made up his mind to buy the mare, and so he adhered to the price he had already fixed upon the beautiful creature. He had meant to "shade" it a little in order to make the sale. But when he discovered the intensity of Hugh Marvin's purpose to buy, he dismissed that idea as wholly unbusinesslike, and even debated with himself whether he ought not to increase his figures. Fearing that Marvin's business instincts might in that case penetrate his policy, he wisely refrained, saying:—

"The price I have given you, Mr. Marvin, is really too small. Considering the filly's

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pedigree and her beauty and strength and all that, I ought to have asked you at least a hundred more. But I'm a man of my word, Mr. Marvin ; I've given you a price, and if you choose to take the mare at that price to-day, you shall have her. But I don't promise for to-morrow. I reserve the right to raise the figures after to-day."

This eloquence had no effect whatever upon Hugh Marvin. He had long ago learned that the word "truth" is a noun that "agrees with anything except horse flesh." So without answering or in any way recognizing what the dealer had said, he simply replied :—

"I think your price much too high for Cairo, where very few people ride fine horses. But I have decided to take the mare at your figures ; have her brought out please, that I may look her over again."

When the mare came, the young man lovingly inspected all her points. Then he examined her feet, one by one. Finally he said :—

"Let one of your boys lead her to my farrier's—Lockster, down in Fourth Street,

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you know ;—let him tell Lockster not to touch her feet till I get there. You see I want to have her shod."

"But she has just been shod, Mr. Marvin."

"Yes, so I see ; but as I do not intend to hitch her to a plough or a wagon, those shoes must come off. Now let me give you a check. Stop that, boy !" he suddenly cried out. "Here you, boy ! What business have you to mount the mare ? I told you to lead her. Off her back instantly !"

It seemed to the stable boy that the young man was unusually particular that morning. Perhaps it seemed so to the horse-dealer also ; but that worthy was used to respect even the whims of good customers, so he gave the boy his orders in very vigorous terms, and the youth walked away leading the mare, greatly to his disgust. He was afraid somebody might think that he feared to ride so spirited an animal, and all that he had of character was included in his pride of horsemanship.

After drawing his check in payment, Marvin hurried to the farrier's and personally directed

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the shoeing of the beautiful mare. He handled half a hundred shoes, finding none to suit his fastidious requirements. Finally he bade the farrier forge the shoes he desired, and sitting upon a grimy block, to the detriment of his attire, he superintended the process, suggesting, criticising, and personally measuring the shoes upon the dainty hoofs of the mare.

The man was a born lover of fine horses, and — well, this particular mare was intended for the use of Gabrielle Latour.

XVII

A 'LITTLE TRANSACTION IN COTTON

JOHN LAND was a sensitive person in his way. He was morbidly self-conscious, though in no proper sense of the word self-respecting. His vanity was enormous, particularly as regarded his personal appearance, but he had not enough of pride to restrain him from any act that might feed his vanity or minister in any way to his aggrandizement. Will Hallam used to say that he overvalued himself and yet was always ready to sell out his self-respect at a discount. In brief, he was a man of weak personality dominated by an exaggerated concern for what others might think of him. He was also excessively nervous in temperament, and finally he had nothing in his make-up that remotely resembled a conscience.

After Hugh Marvin had thrown the ink-

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stands at him, John Land's vanity was sorely wounded by the fact that others knew and were laughing over the occurrence. But his self-respect did not rise to a level prompting him to seek any sort of redress or satisfaction, although Marvin invited him to do so, in a note in which he said : —

“SIR : I have affronted you in a way that no apology could cure, even if I were disposed to make any apology, as I certainly am not. I deem the offensive epithet you applied to a near and dear relative of my own an amply sufficient provocation for what I did in this case.

“But I can imagine that you may wish to seek redress in some way chosen by yourself. This note is simply to inform you that I shall continue to live in my present quarters, and shall attend at my office every day, so that if you have any occasion to communicate with me on this subject, directly or indirectly, you may know where to find me. If you desire to take legal proceedings against me, — and I suppose such proceedings would be possible, — you need

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not be at the trouble of communicating with me at all, as I have instructed my attorneys, Messrs. Brown and Gilchrist, to accept service for me in any proceeding that you may be disposed to institute. It is hardly necessary for me to add that if you prefer to seek redress in more personal ways, I am very much at your service."

To this note no reply was ever sent. John Land did not wish to give the matter any further publicity than it had already gained. He had not enough of self-respect to face the consequences of any effort at redress. At the same time he had too much of that vanity which he mistook for self-respect to remain longer in Cairo while this matter was new enough in men's minds to be made a subject of talk in a community in which there was no special disposition to lose a jest by any overdelicacy of reticence.

Accordingly Land decided that he might find better "business opportunities" in Memphis than any that opened to him in Cairo at that time. And he did so in a very marked degree.

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The Confederacy was falling to pieces, and the Union armies in the field were at that time capturing large stores of cotton that had been bought or otherwise acquired by the Confederate government, and was therefore United States government property when captured. Much of this cotton had been buried for a year or more in damp earth, and was now in an entirely unmarketable condition. The bagging that covered the bales was rotten, and beneath it an inch or two or three or four of the cotton itself was so badly soiled and stained as to be worth but little, while the main body of every bale was quite as good as ever.

A great flood of such cotton was daily pouring into Memphis, and it must be put into marketable condition before it could be offered for sale. The bagging must be removed. The soiled cotton near the surface must be separated from the good cotton within, and each must be baled anew, separately, the good cotton to be sold at full market price and the soiled remainder for whatever pittance it might bring in a market where cotton was so eagerly in

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demand that any decently good bale brought a dollar and a half a pound or even more. In such a market the worst of the refuse was worth ten or twenty cents a pound.

In these conditions John Land saw his opportunity and he quickly seized it. He got a military permit to fence off a few acres of the bluff that fronts the river at Memphis, and convert it into a cotton yard of his own. All that bluff had been given to the city many years before to be used as a riverside park. But John Land did not concern himself to consider any technical rights of the conquered and garrison-governed city. Neither did the military authorities in control there. So John Land secured a vast space on the bluff to be used as a storage yard for cotton without any rental whatever. There he set up half a dozen presses.

Then he secured a contract with the government's agents, under which he was to receive the captured cotton, strip it, clean it, sort out the good parts of it, and put it into fresh and marketable bales.

As a part of his remuneration for this work

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he was to have the soiled trimmings of all the bales for his own.

It was a profitable bargain to John Land as it stood, but he was not a person to be content with a good profit when a better one was within reach.

Presently the government's agents and inspectors began to complain that Land was apt to "cut too deep" in trimming the bales; that too much good, marketable cotton managed somehow to get itself mixed up with the refuse.

Now John Land was above all things a diplomatic person. It was never his habit to "go off at half-cock." So on this occasion he suavely said to the two government agents who were criticising his work:—

"It may be true, gentlemen. Indeed, I am inclined to think it is true. You see I am very conscientious in doing this work—over-conscientious perhaps. At any rate I have steadily borne in mind that the smallest fragment of discolored or otherwise damaged cotton in a bale reduces the grade and the price of that bale by one-third or one-half. It has

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been my conscientious endeavor not to permit that to happen in the case of any bale prepared by me for government sale. Perhaps in some cases I have been over-careful on this point."

"Now look here!" broke in that one of the two government agents who had most of the brutal courage of corruption, "you needn't be so smooth-tongued and mealy-mouthed about the thing. We understand. But you're making a mighty good thing out o' this cotton-trimming business, and as you can only do it subject to our inspection, we don't see why we shouldn't have a percentage of the profits. That's flat-footed. That's a business proposition, and as there's nobody by to hear, I don't mind putting it to you flat. Of course there ain't any of us a-workin' for our health."

John Land listened attentively to the end. Then he said:—

"If you two gentlemen will take supper with me to-night in my private rooms at the Gayosa Hotel, I think we may be able to make an arrangement that will be mutually satisfactory."

"Oh, no, you don't," said the spokesman

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of the pair. "There might be somebody in a closet or behind a curtain somewhere, and I'm not going to run my head into a noose of that sort."

"I assure you—" began Land, protestingly.

"Never mind assurances. These are war times, and assurances don't count. I'm ready to talk business, if I can be certain there's nobody to hear, but not otherwise."

"Very well," answered Land. "At what hotel are you staying?"

"At the Commercial."

"Well, suppose you invite me to supper then. Rent a room in the very top of the house, and have supper served there. I'll come, and we'll talk business. You see I'm not so suspicious as you are, or so much afraid."

"Well, it ain't hardly fair to put it that way," said the other. "You see we're in government service and you ain't. It makes a big difference—even a penitentiary difference sometimes."

The matter was so arranged and the three met at supper. When the meal had been

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served and the waiters dismissed, Land, in his persuasively confident manner, said:—

“Now, gentlemen, we are friends together. What do you want?”

“We want a share in them cotton pickings, that’s all.”

“Why not a share in the cotton itself?” asked John Land. “It is worth eight or ten times as much as the pickings.”

“Of course it is; but the cotton belongs to the government.”

“Of course. But as you two men are the only representatives of the government in the matter, what is to prevent us from giving the pickings to the government and taking the cotton for ourselves?”

“I don’t understand,” almost gasped the spokesman.

“I’ll explain then. Under my contract I am required to store all this cotton without charge to the government, during all the time it is here awaiting the trimming, and for three months afterward, unless the government orders it shipped sooner. As a matter of

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fact the shipments are very slow and irregular, as you gentlemen know. Now when the trimmed and rebaled cotton is shipped, it goes to New York or Boston. It is in beautifully bagged bales. So are the trimmings when I bale and ship them on my own account. Now let me explain a little further. Some of this cotton has been buried for a long time; some of it for a very brief time; some of it hasn't been buried at all. Nobody knows, as regards any bale, how far it has been rotted or stained or otherwise injured. Oh, you begin to see?" he said, observing a light as of dawning intelligence in the eyes of his interlocutor.

"Yes, I begin to smell daylight," answered the other.

"Very well then. As you two gentlemen are the only persons in Memphis in any way authorized to inspect and criticise my work, the thing is dead easy. I'll give the government some very pretty bales of very badly damaged cotton—you see the weather and long burial and all that are to blame for these conditions—and besides, the condition of that cotton won't

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be known for months to come. In the meanwhile we'll finish the job. I'll sell my machinery and go out of business, leaving an irresponsible agent here to ship the government's cotton when ordered to do so. You two can resign your offices."

"Then what you propose—"

"What I propose is to give the government principally the refuse pickings, and keep most of the good cotton for ourselves."

"It's a daring scheme," said one of the men, musingly.

"Oh, well, I don't know," answered Land. "There isn't much risk in it. Things are done at rather loose ends in these war times you know. It will be a long time before the bales are opened, and if a good many of them are found to contain too large a proportion of stained and damaged cotton, it will only show that I, as the contractor, and you two gentlemen, as the official guardians of the government's interests, have been over-conscientious in giving to the government every ounce we could of even constructively marketable cotton,

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leaving the contractor, as his remuneration, far less than he might have taken but for his conscientiousness and your vigilance. See?"

"Yes, I see. I don't see why we shouldn't work the game."

"Very well then, let's work it at once. There's a lot of money in it for us three; but as my contract will expire in three months, so far as the work of trimming and rebaling is concerned, we must begin at once."

Then the three men of business set to work to arrange terms of division. As the originator of the scheme and the partner who must do all the work besides taking the lion's share of the risk, Land was to have two-thirds of the profit, the remaining third being divided between the other two.

* * * * *

Ninety days later John Land closed out his business in Memphis and returned to Cairo.

He deposited somewhat more than half a million dollars in a bank. Presently he transferred most of the money to New York and a part of it to London.

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It was observed that through his New York bankers he invested largely in interest-bearing securities, — mainly government bonds.

It was also observed that he presently began wearing in his shirt-front diamonds that could not be bought for less than twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars, while the value of his diamond sleeve-links was estimated at quite all of half that sum.

Diamonds pay no income to their possessor, but they are a conveniently compact form of wealth, and they command their full price in any country to which their possessor may have occasion to flee.

XVIII

A LECTURE FROM LIDA

THE first thing that Gabrielle did, when the mare was brought for her early morning ride with Hugh Marvin, was to make love to the beautiful blue-grass creature. Nervously shy at first, the mare presently began to understand that the girl who caressed her nose and affectionately smoothed her satinlike coat was a real horse lover, and she wasn't long in giving such response to the caressing as a dumb creature may. She whinnied in a gentle way. She laid her head on the girl's shoulder as if to ask for a further caress. She even rubbed her face against that of the young woman.

"You must be a little patient with me, Mr. Marvin," said Gabrielle, as she lifted the mare's feet one by one and stroked the pasterns. "I

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must keep you waiting for a little while. I must make the mare know me before I mount. She will carry me willingly then, and she will need no control. She is a nervous creature, half afraid all the time, but when she becomes acquainted with me, and learns to regard me as a friend, she will trust me, and not be afraid when I am on her back. She will know that there is no danger in anything I want her to do. She will feel that I am guarding and protecting her against all the fear-inspiring old hats or barrels or locomotives that we may meet. It is always better to win a horse's confidence than to inspire him with fear."

"It is a good deal the same way with men," answered Marvin. "That is why so many despotisms have come to grief."

There was no time for reply. The girl was in the saddle now, and the mare, which had never before been ridden by a woman, showed only a temporary uneasiness at the novelty of her mount. She seemed to know that the young woman on her back was well disposed to her, in spite of the fact that she sat upon a side-saddle

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with her bewilderingly voluminous riding-habit all on one side. After a few gyrations, made in an instinctive effort to rid herself of the long skirt, the mare reconciled herself to the feminine eccentricity and bore her light burden gently and proudly.

There was an earth embankment all around Cairo, called the levee. Its purpose was to keep the rivers out of the town at times of flood. For perhaps a mile of space on the Ohio River side of the town, this levee formed a busy street, with railroad tracks running along it, with stores and banks and warehouses and mills fronting upon it, and with steamboats lying three deep at its foot. But on the Mississippi side of the town there was no landing-place, and so the miles of Mississippi levee were without buildings of any kind facing them. The levee there was simply an earth embankment with a level top forty or fifty feet wide. There were great sycamore and cottonwood trees on either side, but with no houses near, and in the upper parts with no human habitations of any kind even within sight. In brief, this Missis-



WITHOUT EVEN A HINT OF CHALLENGE TO HIM TO FOLLOW,
SHE PUSHED THE MARE TO HER FULLEST RACING SPEED.

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sippi levee was a perfect woodland road, broad, straight in its reaches, perfectly drained by the slope on either side, as absolutely level as engineering skill could make it, and well shaded by the great trees that overhung it.

When Marvin piloted the girl through unoccupied streets and presently brought her out upon the levee, just as the five o'clock sun showed itself over the Ohio River on the right and nearly in front of them, Gabrielle fell into an ecstasy of delight, such as a six-year-old child might have shown. She forgot even her manners in her enjoyment of the perfect morning, the perfect road, and the delight of riding a superb animal.

"What a beautiful road it is for a run!" she exclaimed, rather to herself than to her companion, and then, without even a hint of challenge to him to follow, she pushed the mare to her fullest racing speed, and went flying away as if she were mounted upon the wings of the wind.

Marvin followed at his horse's best speed, but although his animal was of blue blood,

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he had no such pedigree as that belonging to the mare, nor had he her nimbleness of foot. It was not until the girl drew rein after a mile run, and turned to meet him, that he succeeded in coming up with her.

"I must buy another horse," he said, "if I am to ride with you in the mornings."

"No," she replied with contrite eagerness of protest. "It is I who am in the wrong, and I will never ride with you again if you do not accept my apology."

The young man laughingly tried to interrupt, but the girl insistently broke in upon his speech, saying:—

"No, no, no! You must listen. It was rude of me to break away in that fashion. It was inexcusable—intolerable. But I couldn't help it. It is a year since I last mounted a horse. It is a year since I had sympathy in greeting the sunrise. Do you wonder that when I saw the sun, and felt so superb an animal under me, my emotions ran away with me? I humbly beg your pardon."

"I am very sorry you said that," Marvin

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answered, holding out a hand which she warmly grasped.

“But why?” she asked.

“Because I want you to do that sort of thing every time you feel like it. It means joy to you, and your joy will always be my rejoicing.”

If Gabrielle Latour had said the right thing at that time, or if she had remained silent saying nothing at all, Hugh Marvin would have declared his love then and there, and perhaps these two lives would have been linked. But instead of saying the right thing or saying nothing, Gabrielle said:—

“You are always very good and kindly to me. You are like my father.”

How could a warm-blooded young man declare his love for a girl who had just told him that she regarded him as “like her father”?

So the ride ended in nothing, and so did many succeeding rides.

But one day Hugh Marvin's sister, Mrs. Will Hallam, called him into her nursery.

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"You are a good deal of an idiot, Hugh," she said by way of a beginning.

"I dare say I am," he answered. "I often reach that conclusion respecting myself. But I wonder what specific manifestation of idiocy you have now particularly in mind."

"Oh, it's general, it's chronic. It runs through all your conduct."

"Would you mind explaining?" he asked.

"Not at all. You are madly in love with Gabrielle Latour."

"Yes, I have discovered that to my sore discomfort, seeing that she is not at all in love with me. But I do not quite see how being in love with Gabrielle Latour can be regarded as an idiocy."

"It isn't," she quickly replied. "It's the sanest act of your life. The manifestation of idiocy lies in the fact that you haven't known how to win her love in return. Really, Hugh, you are very stupid."

"I suppose I am. At any rate I don't at all know what you mean. How might I induce the girl to love me?"

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"What a question! Of course I shall not answer it. I should be guilty of disloyalty to my sex if I did."

"But how, then—you see I don't at all know what it is that I ought to do."

"Of course you don't. How should you, being a man? Men are so stupid where women are concerned! I'll give you a hint. Do you suppose a girl who is proud and full of self-respect is going to throw herself at a man's head by falling in love with him before he invites her to do so?"

"Then you think I should speak to her on the subject?"

"For heaven's sake, no!" cried his sister. Then she laughed a little. Finally she asked:—

"Did you ever hear of 'suggestion,' Hugh? You often practise it, anyhow. The other day you told me you hadn't had your breakfast when you came to my house at eleven o'clock. That suggested to me the propriety of having a round of beef and some bread and butter brought in without waiting for the luncheon

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hour. There, I'm not going to say another word, except that up to this time Gabrielle Latour has never thought of loving you otherwise than as a girl might love her father or her elder brother, and it is all your own fault, you stupid!"

"But, Lida—" he called as she hurried out of the room.

"Good night!" she called back. And she was gone.

XIX

SUGGESTION

LIDA'S enigmatical lecture was delivered in the evening, and Marvin went at once to his* rooms and to bed.

Perhaps it wasn't a very good night for sleeping, or perhaps — something else. At any rate Hugh Marvin found himself exceedingly wakeful. His sister's words lingered in his memory with tormenting persistence, and he did not clearly understand them.

"Why is it, I wonder, that a woman never will say things right out, as men do?" he asked himself. "But they won't, and so there's no use in wondering."

He began presently to understand, in some measure at least, what Mrs. Hallam had meant by her use of that word "suggestion." But he

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was far less clear in his mind as to how he might act upon the hint.

“She means,” he thought, as he tossed upon his bed, “that if ever Gabrielle is to love me, I must in some way suggest the thought to her mind. But how am I to do that? The only way I can think of to do that would be to go to her and frankly tell her what my own feelings are and what I should like her to think about. But that would never do under present circumstances. I suppose I’m a ‘stupid’ as Lida says, but for my life I can’t think of any other way to make the ‘suggestion’ needed. Wonder what other fellows do in such cases? Oh, I know; they send boxes of candy every day, or they frequent ice-cream saloons. Ah! bah! those are vulgar attentions intended for women whose palates are more important than their minds or their souls.”

After thinking a while, the young man suddenly sat up in bed and exclaimed:—

“By Jove, I have it; the essence of it all is marked attention, such attention as shall compel the young woman in the case to ask,

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‘Why does he do this?’ such attention as she cannot pass over as casual or merely polite, such attention as may show real and earnest solicitude and concern.”

Having thus settled the matter in his own mind, the young man at last went to sleep. The next morning he made diligent inquiry for a florist, only to learn that there was no such person in Cairo. The only flower gardens of consequence in the little town were those of Mrs. Hallam herself, of which Gabrielle, of course, enjoyed free use and advantage. Obviously there was no thoroughfare in the direction of a daily tribute of flowers.

Then came to him another thought. “Gabrielle is an intellectual woman — well, not just exactly intellectual, perhaps, but she has brains and education and culture, and she has been accustomed to read a good deal. I’ll send her some magazines and the like. Then I’ll follow the thing up. I suppose I was unconsciously trying to practise what Lida calls ‘suggestion’ when I proposed the early morning rides. Well, they haven’t seemed to act in that way.

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Quite the contrary in fact. When we go out, she is so taken up with the sun and the mare, and the 'smell of the morning' as she calls it, that she doesn't give a single thought to me, except perhaps now and then to think how grateful she ought to be. Confound gratitude! Anyhow, the rides haven't acted suggestively, and there aren't any flowers to be had in this uncivilized town, and I simply *won't* insult her with tributes of bonbons, so I'm going to try books and that sort of thing."

So he went to Blelock's and looked over the magazines and periodicals on sale there, selecting the best of them and ordering them sent to his rooms.

There he stripped off the wrappings which were blazoned all over with the bookseller's advertisements, and wrapped the literature anew in paper that was innocent of any sort of craft of that kind. He sent the parcel by a negro boy, together with a note that, brief as it was, had cost him a full hour's work when he ought to have been at his office looking after his affairs. In the note he said : —

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“It occurs to me that after our early morning rides you must be a trifle weary now and then, and the thought has come to me, that perhaps you might find it restful to have a little light literature at hand, with which to while away the time. At any rate I send you this budget on the chance that it may contain something to interest or amuse your leisure. There is a good deal of what seems to me good literature of an agreeable sort in some of these periodicals. Perhaps you will not find it so. In that event you have only to cast the whole lot of them aside as so much waste paper.

“Pray do not trouble yourself to send an answer. The thing is of too little consequence for that. Oh, by the way, I am called to Chicago on business, so that I shall not have the pleasure of riding with you for two or three mornings to come. But my man Moses will take the mare to you every morning in order that you may give her her necessary exercise.”

“Upon my word Hugh is improving,” thought Mrs. Will Hallam, when Gabrielle

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showed her the magazines, and gave her the note to read. "That is a master stroke, to set her to riding alone for a day or two. She'll find out how much his company means. I didn't think he had so much nous."

But the good sister spoke none of the thoughts that were suggested to her mind by the incident. She was a woman gifted and brilliant in conversation, but she knew how to hold her tongue in leash when that seemed best.

XX

A LOST OPPORTUNITY

HUMAN nature is perhaps the queerest product of creation or evolution or whatever else it is that brought all of us into being. It is never consistent with itself. It is scarcely too much to say that it is never quite candid and truthful even in its dealings with itself.

When Hugh Marvin, in his note, said to Gabrielle Latour, "Pray do not trouble yourself to send an answer," he probably meant it in a way. At least he meant that she should not feel under any obligation to send an answer. Yet all that day until the time came for him to board a late afternoon train for Chicago, he found himself waiting for an answer and uneasily wondering why no answer came.

Gabrielle in her turn was equally perplexed.

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She, with her absolute sincerity of mind, accepted the young man's words as meaning all that was said in them and perhaps a trifle more. "He is a very busy man of affairs," she reflected. "He is willing, in his kindly, almost fatherly way, to give up his early mornings to me, or rather, he likes to ride in the early morning, and he invites me to go with him because he thinks I enjoy it, as I certainly do. But he doesn't want to be bothered with notes from me, and so when he sends me all those delightful magazines, and politely writes a note to accompany them, he forbids me even to say 'thank you.' Never mind, I'll say it when we meet again, and I'll say it in such a way that he shall know how truly I mean it."

Thus are cross-purposes set going in this whimsical world of ours.

Gabrielle was full of joyous gratitude when Moses brought the mare for her use on the first morning of Hugh Marvin's absence. It seemed to her that her benefactor would never end his delicately considerate activities in her behalf, and she wondered why he should be so

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ceaselessly thoughtful of her. That inquiry was a lock to which she had as yet no key.

Nevertheless she did not enjoy her ride that morning though it was a long one. She went up the Mississippi levee, over a cross levee to the Ohio, and up that bank to Mound City, half a dozen miles farther up the stream. There she saw the great array of grim ironclads and other naval craft that lay at anchor in the river, suggesting the power and determination of the great Republic to assert, defend, and maintain itself. But she was in no mood to admire the brave display.

"After all," she thought, "it represents the power that is crushing and destroying our Southland."

With that she turned the mare's head and galloped away down the levee toward Cairo. After a little while another thought came to her, and she drew rein to consider it.

"Why should I care now," she asked herself, "as between North and South? So far as I know, the only friends I have left in the world are in Cairo yonder, and surely I love them.

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They are ceaselessly kind to me, they are generous in mind, and they have done nothing to the hurt of my people. Really I have no people now, and as I am not a man, there is no occasion for me to choose between the two sides in a war which I never understood and which I don't think anybody else understands very clearly."

There came over her then a feeling of loneliness which was intolerably oppressive. No such feeling had ever come to her when Hugh Marvin had been the companion of her rides, but she did not think of that. She thought only of how completely alone she was in this vast world full of people, and if a tear or two slipped out from beneath her eyelids, surely the fact was not one to be wondered at.

Presently a kindlier, a more hopeful thought succeeded.

"No," she said to herself, "I am not absolutely alone, I am not wholly friendless, and I need never be so if I do not permit myself to fall into a morbid melancholy. All my own people are gone, it is true—my mother, my

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father, my brothers, and even my aunt, the last relative I had alive, so far as I know or shall ever know. And yet I have never been without friends. Mr. Marvin rescued me from starvation down there in the swamp, and he has been ceaselessly kind to me ever since. Lida is like a real sister to me, and her children are dearer little lovers than I ever knew before. As for Captain Will Hallam — well, he is one of nature's gentlemen. He is one of the very few people in this world from whom I could accept help in a time of need without feeling myself oppressed by obligation. He is so generous and so healthfully breezy with it all!

"I mustn't be morbid. I have good and dear and trusty friends. I must rejoice in their friendship, and add to their number such other people as I can who are worth loving."

With that, and with a new optimism inspiring her soul, she shook out her rein, chirruped to the mare, — whom she had named "Hot-foot," — and galloped back to Cairo in time for breakfast, and with a healthy appetite for that meal.

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It was after three mornings of this lonely riding that Hugh Marvin again presented himself as her escort. Then for the first time she had opportunity to thank him for sending the magazines, which had by that time been supplemented by a second supply of later numbers, sent upon Marvin's orders.

"It is very hard to thank you as I should, Mr. Marvin," the girl said, when together they reached the broad, smooth road on top of the Mississippi levee, and Hotfoot at last consented to behave herself in somewhat orderly fashion.

"It would have been easier to send you a note of thanks in the first place, if you had not forbidden that."

Hugh Marvin's heart bounded. He understood now why that hoped-for note had never come, and he was satisfied.

"How frank, and honest, and sincere, and trustful the girl is!" he thought to himself. "Any other and more artificial young woman would have understood at once, and would have sent me a letter anyhow. I like this one's way best. She takes me at my word,

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never dreaming that I could mean more or less than I say. And how unworthy I am of such confidence! Even when I was writing her not to reply, I expected a reply, and all day I expected it. I wish I were half as sincere as she is!”

To Gabrielle he said:—

“There was no need of thanks then, and there is none now. The service was a trifling one at best, and it gave me pleasure to render it. It is just as if I should offer you a chair on the piazza of my sister’s house.”

“You are very good to me,” she answered, “and I am very grateful for your kindness.”

“I wish you would quit being that,” he replied.

“Quit being what?”

“Why ‘grateful.’ That word implies benefaction of some sort, and somehow I don’t like to think of you, Gabrielle, as receiving benefactions from me or from anybody else.”

She tried to interject something at this point, but he raised his hand in protest and went on:—

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"It is only a pleasure to me to do these trifling things for your entertainment, and by the way, there is something very serious that I want to say to you."

"What is it, please?"

"Why, you know I am what is called an educated man. That is to say, I have gone through college and taken a degree and all that sort of thing. But since my graduation I have read almost nothing except the newspapers. In my boyhood I read a good deal more of literature than most boys do, and I had a passion for it. Of late years I have had no time for reading and I have a very pronounced conviction that no man is really educated who doesn't go on reading literature after his graduation. So I have made up my mind to reform, just as a man does who has fallen into the habit of drinking and decides to quit. I am going to take up my reading again and give all my evenings to it. But I don't know just where and how to begin. I want you to help me if you will."

"But how can *I* help *you*?" the girl asked

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in bewilderment. Her conception of this man was that of one so unmeasurably her superior that the thought of her offering him advice, or assistance, or counsel, seemed almost ludicrously preposterous.

"Well, I'll tell you how. In that first parcel of magazines and periodicals there must be embodied pretty nearly all that is worth while in the current literature published since I quit reading. There is much else, of course, much that a busy man need not waste time in reading. What I ask of you is to mark those articles that seem to you best worthy of attention, and to return the periodicals containing them, so that I may read them. You understand, don't you? I have become a commission merchant. I don't want to be always and only a commission merchant."

"I quite understand," she answered, staring straight before her. "But how am I to help you? How am I to judge what you ought to read?"

"I didn't ask you to do that," he quickly replied. "I asked you only to mark those

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things which you think I shall want to read — especially those things that have most interested you. You see one must have sympathy in his reading if he is to be benefited by it.”

The girl turned upon him suddenly, and looked him straight in the eyes.

“You are not trifling with me?” she asked. “You are not pretending out of politeness? You are not — oh, Mr. Marvin, you know what I would ask.”

He held out his hand and she placed hers in it. Then he looked at her with a gaze as frank as her own had been.

“All that I said was sincere,” he answered.

“Thank you,” she replied. “May we not gallop now?”

So they galloped, and Hugh Marvin let slip his opportunity. Perhaps he was a “stupid” as Lida Hallam had said.

XXI

HUGH MARVIN MAKES UP HIS MIND

SOON after that ride Gabrielle Latour returned a number of the periodicals to their giver, with articles marked in them for his reading. After a little while the young man began haunting the local bookstore, going thither of evenings to look over the new books and more particularly the old books. He was by all odds the best read and the most cultivated man in Cairo, and so all the men in the town who had aspirations of culture learned presently to haunt the bookshop "to hear Hugh Marvin talk books," they said. And as the young man bought books in considerable numbers and sent them to Gabrielle, the bookseller was glad enough to let him read aloud from the "stock" whenever he chose to "talk books" to a little company that became inter-

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ested in the talk and bought a book now and then.

One evening, for example, Hugh Marvin fell to talking about Thomas Moore's prefaces, and, borrowing the books from the shelves, read aloud those pessimistic predictions of the Irish poet concerning America which events had so conspicuously refused to fulfil. The reading so far interested one member of the little audience that he instantly bought the entire set of books, which the dealer had kept for three years on his shelves as "dead stock."

About that same time Marvin learned that Gabrielle had not yet read Dickens except here and there a volume. So he made up his mind to send her a good set of the great novelist's works. He directed the bookseller to send her the Globe edition, at that time the best there was in American print. The next day he called upon Gabrielle, and she thanked him for the books. Upon inspection he discovered that instead of the edition he had ordered, the bookseller had sent a cheap, meanly printed, and paper-covered set called the "Plum Pudding"

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edition. The dealer had mistaken the plum-pudding printed upon the paper covers for a globe.

That set was promptly sent back, and that evening the bookseller received an instructive lecture from Hugh Marvin on the duty of a dealer in books to acquaint himself with editions. The young man, warming to his subject, went on to explain to the bookseller that his business was more than mercantile, that its pursuit entailed upon him the duty of guiding the popular taste as regards books, and a good deal more of like effect.

"You must read," he said. "You must study. You must acquaint yourself with literature and with the geography of literature—I mean with editions. You should know all about books, and tell your customers about them. You should make yourself the guide and monitor of those who buy."

The ethics of the book-selling craft may or may not have appealed to the dealer, but the thought found lodgement in his mind that by acquainting himself somewhat with the mer-

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chandise he dealt in, he might considerably increase his sales, and accordingly he began a diligent study of descriptive catalogues, which soon made him more successful than he had ever been before as a vender of the merchandise of the mind.

In the meanwhile, a good edition of Dickens was procured for Gabrielle Latour, and she fell to reading it ravenously. As a very natural and necessary result, she and Hugh Marvin fell into the habit of spending the lengthening early winter evenings in a discussion of these and other books, and incidentally of art, music, and the drama, of which the girl knew a good deal, and Hugh Marvin very little indeed.

But with such a teacher he was eager to learn, and that counted for a good deal.

Lida Hallam looked on at this little drama with pleased interest, but she said no word that might suggest that she was taking notes, even after the reading had taken a wider range.

Hugh Marvin was far less pleased with results. In her literary tastes and judgments Gabrielle always maintained a pleasing inde-

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pendence of mind, but in her attitude toward him personally, she seemed still to suggest far more of gratitude and deference than he desired. Perhaps he was mistaken in this. Sometimes, for a moment, he believed that he was so, and in such moments he was full of hope and rejoicing. These moments were transitory, however, so that generally the young man's mood was one of disappointment.

"I am making of myself too much of the schoolmaster," he reflected. "I wonder if a girl ever fell in love with her schoolmaster?"

Then after a little the thought came to him:—

"How would it do to treat her with neglect now and then? She is filled with the idea that I am somehow a half-parental guardian to her, a sort of benefactor to whom she must pay the profoundest deference, when it isn't deference that I want. This is a good time perhaps to make a change in my methods. The winter movement of merchandise has set in, and I really am an exceedingly busy man. I might easily stay away a good deal, I suppose.

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The pressure of business upon my time and attention would be excuse enough for that. But confound this Cairo climate, the mornings are still fine, almost all of them, and she knows I'm not too busy for a ride between five and seven o'clock. Besides, I don't feel like riding alone, when so charming a companion is ready to ride with me. Then again, I wouldn't for anything have Gabrielle feel herself neglected."

He was sitting in his rooms as he pondered all these things. There was a blazing fire of Pittsburg coal in the grate in front of him. A softly shaded lamp burned on the table, casting its light over his left shoulder. He had meant to read during that evening, and he had arranged all his surroundings with reference to that purpose. But now that he had fallen into meditation with Gabrielle Latour for its subject, he had pushed his book aside in order that he might go on dreaming.

"I suppose the simple fact is," he said to himself, "that my only way out of this mess is to take the bull by the horns, and boldly propose marriage to Gabrielle."

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Then he let his mind wander and wander for a while.

At last he thought : —

“ After all, I don’t know what her attitude toward me really is. She is an immeasurably proud woman. She would sacrifice her head rather than let any man so much as suspect that she loved him, until after he had invited her to do so. By Jove, I’ll risk everything on a chance ! Lida says I should take measures to suggest my state of mind to Gabrielle. Very well, I have done so, with no apparent results. By the way, I wonder just what constitutes ‘ suggestion ’ and what its laws and limits are ? Now that I think of it, I suppose I ‘ suggested ’ something to Ezra Brass down there at Memphis when I pitched him overboard and left him to work out his own salvation by swimming. I must have ‘ suggested ’ to his mind that on the whole it was safer not to make ribald suggestions concerning a woman under my protection in my presence. Yes, there are various methods of ‘ suggestion ’ possible. I’ll declare my state of mind to Gabrielle, and

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ask her to be my wife. The very worst she can do is to reject my suit. After that perhaps she may think about me otherwise than as a kindly benefactor or a half-fatherly big brother. And who knows? After I have forced her to think about me in warmer ways, who knows but that the new thought may appeal to her? Anyhow, I'll try it."

But this resolution was taken in the night, under influence of a soft light and a glowing coal fire. It seemed less wise in the gray of the next morning, and so young Marvin postponed its execution for a time.

XXII

“YOU ARE THE RIGHTEST MAN”

IT was about this time that John Land returned to Cairo, bearing with him the spoils of his adventure in serving the government and swindling it.

There was no obvious reason why he should return to Cairo at all. With half a million dollars in possession, the world lay all before him where to choose. He had no ties of kindred in Cairo, and the little city at that time certainly offered few inducements to a man of wealth to take up his residence there. There were next to no opportunities there for the spending of money in pursuit of enjoyment.

But John Land was as vain as a peacock. He had been an insignificant clerk in Cairo, sleeping in a little room in a ramshackle building on the levee, and getting his meals wherever he could get them cheapest. It pleased

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him, therefore, to go back to Cairo and exploit himself there as a man of wealth and therefore of consequence ; for in those days in the West wealth always carried consequence with it.

His impulse was not an unnatural one. We all know how Shakespeare, as soon as he accumulated money, abandoned all the joys of his rich intellectual life in London, his association there with the foremost men of his time, and his contact with that active, seething, intellectual movement which had so greatly inspired him, and deliberately retired to Stratford, merely in order that he might buy a little property there and ruffle it on equal terms with a lot of "squires" whose learning was nil, and whose intellectual activity scarcely rose above that of clams or clods.

Shakespeare went to Stratford because he wanted to "show off" to the astonishment of those who had known him as a vagabond in his youth. John Land was in no sense a Shakespeare, but his impulse was the same. He wanted to ruffle it among the people who had formerly known him as an impecunious

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young man, whose credit was not good for a week's table-board at any eating house in the town. It was among those people only that he could get complete satisfaction out of a display of his wealth.

And how he did put it in evidence! He rented the whole front of the first floor above stairs of the St. Charles Hotel. In order to complete his suite he even bought out the lease of one old lady who had planned to remain where she was for the rest of her natural life. He set up a stable and stocked it with fine horses, several of which he dared not drive or ride. For in spite of his great stature and his strength and his personal presence, John Land was in his soul a coward. That fact indeed and his vanity had been the keynotes of his career. He had entered college with so great a flourish of trumpets as to be made at once the recognized leader of his class. He had spent the little money he possessed so lavishly that before the end of his second year he had been obliged to withdraw himself for lack of funds. He gave it out that the further pros-

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ecution of the course of study had no interest for him.

“It is all very well for plodders,” he had said to his classmates with lofty superiority, “but if a man has any initiative in him, it is only a waste of time.”

Now that he had become a very rich man his first purpose was to make the fact manifest to those who had known him in a greatly inferior estate.

And now another thing happened which illustrated the weakness of human nature. The young man who was known to have half a million dollars in bank—for news of that kind runs on four fast legs—was beset by invitations to houses into which six months earlier—when he had possessed nothing but the meagre salary of an inferior clerk—he would have sought entry in vain. In those greedily grabbing days near the end of the war, wealth was the one passport to social esteem, not in Cairo alone, but in every city of the country. It was a grovelling time. The multi-millionnaire of the present did not exist

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then, but the man whose wealth was reckoned in six figures had open doors and glad greetings wherever he might go.

Very naturally John Land now and then met Gabrielle Latour in the houses of the many friends of Mrs. Will Hallam, though Gabrielle attended no social functions. She felt herself to be in mourning still, although she did not drape herself in black. Moreover, she felt herself socially out of place and a misfit at the North so long as the war, now obviously drawing to an end, should continue.

“The spring will end it all,” said Hugh Marvin to her one day. “Lee’s power of resistance is very nearly exhausted. As soon as the winter’s mud dries in the Virginia roads, Grant with his practically limitless numbers of men will stretch his line farther and farther south and west at Petersburg. The stretching will reduce Lee’s lines to nothingness of resisting power. Then Grant will concentrate at some point, chosen by himself, and break through the army that has so long and so stubbornly held him at bay.”

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"And do you rejoice in that prospect, Mr. Marvin?" asked the girl, with a glint as of lightning in her great brown eyes.

"Yes and no. It is a pity that an army so devoted and so heroic as that of Northern Virginia must be cut to pieces and forced to surrender in despair. But as that result is inevitable, it seems to me that the sooner it comes the better it will be for the people on both sides. At any rate it will make an end of the wholesale plundering that is now rampant, with its headquarters here in Cairo. Perhaps incidentally it may so far sober the country as to remove from politics and power a horde of rascally incapables who under present conditions have seats in Congress or offices of other kinds to which they could never have aspired in any but war times."

"Are there many such?" she asked.

"A good many," he replied. "I know some of them. One is a rascally ex-bar-keeper who for a time represented in Congress a district not very remote from here. In any ordinary time the suggestion of such

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a man for a seat in Congress would have been laughed at by everybody. But in these disturbed times, when nearly everybody except the speculating and peculating politicians is in the army, this fellow Rukensdorff managed in corrupt ways to secure a nomination and an election. He shamelessly used his place for plunder, and now that he has been left out of Congress by a new election, he still conducts a considerable blackmailing correspondence, franking his letters with his signature, G. W. Rukensdorff, M.C., although he is no longer a member of Congress and has no more right to frank his letters than to steal so many postage-stamps out of the nearest post-office. His case is an extreme one, perhaps, but it is illustrative. The demoralization of war has not led to a Congress composed mainly of such men as he is, but it has given to many such men their opportunity. So long as the war lasts, the number of such men in Congress, in State Legislatures, and in office must continue to increase.”

“But you say that this man Rukensdorff

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has been defeated by reëlection. Things are growing better then."

"Not at all. Rukensdorff was defeated by another and a worse rascal named Avalon, who happens to possess superior ability and more money. He's a 'general' in a small way — general of militia perhaps. Anyhow he's a smooth-tongued, plausible, sanctimonious person — well, never mind about him. I had an opportunity once to send him to state's prison, but I didn't do it."

"Why didn't you, if he deserved it?"

"Well, you see, his wife came to me and begged me 'spare him,' and I couldn't resist a woman's tears."

"I thought you were a strong man, Mr. Marvin!" answered the girl, with a note of distinct displeasure in her voice.

"I don't know whether I am a strong man or not," he replied. "But in this case the circumstances were peculiar. The man concerned once did me a grievous injury, and in my wrath I swore that I would have my revenge. But — well, when I had him completely in my power,

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when it rested only with me to produce a scrap of paper in order to condemn him to hard labor for a long term of years, I thought that after all vengeance doesn't 'pay,' as we say in this very commercial time. I did not think I should be the happier for having wreaked vengeance upon that man, particularly when I saw other rascals all around me rejoicing in the rich proceeds of their rascality. There was in that man's case nobody's wrong to set right, and when I thought of the disgrace that must fall upon his wife and upon those innocent boys and girls of his, I went to the fire and burned the paper that would have sent him to the penitentiary. His wife saw me do it, and she knew certainly that the document was reduced to ashes. Immediately her husband sought and bought his nomination for Congress, and was elected, there being practically no opposition in the district. After that—well, never mind. That's another matter.”

“No, it isn't,” answered the girl, quickly, and with eager earnestness. “I want to know the sequel to the story. I think I know it already.”

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“What is your conjecture?”

“The woman for whose sake you spared that man became your most implacable enemy as soon as she certainly knew you had destroyed the only evidence you had with which to convict her husband. Is it not so?”

“The woman is my enemy certainly. She has sought in every way she could to injure me. But I regard all that as right enough. She is loyal to her husband, and when a woman is that, I think nothing else counts.”

The girl had risen to her feet in her eager earnestness of attention. Presently she said:—

“Hugh Marvin, you are the rightest man I ever knew or heard of!”

Instantly she left him, and that night she excused herself from supper, so that he saw her no more.

XXIII

PERSONA NON GRATA

IF John Land had had any courage, or if he had been a tolerably honest man, he would have been limitlessly happy at this time.

As it was, he was utterly and ceaselessly miserable.

The man was by nature an optimist. The world was apt to wear for him a smiling face whenever it could, and he was in the habit of returning the smiles with a compound interest of jolly laughter. When he had been a poor clerk with less than enough salary to meet his expenses, he had always put on so great an air of prosperity that he was able to borrow of his fellow-clerks enough money to make good the deficiencies of his income as compared with his expenditures for clothes and other necessities. He had not paid back these loans at the time,

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but somehow he managed to seem so prosperous and so well dressed, and so confident of himself and of the future, that those who had lent him money were disposed to feel that John Land was "able to owe his debts," and so they rarely beset him with duns. Whenever one of them did so, Land promptly borrowed enough from some other to satisfy the claim and, as he put it, "leave him a few dollars to the good."

Now that he had come back to Cairo with what in that time was regarded as large wealth, he rather ostentatiously paid off his borrowings, insisting upon adding interest in every case. In that way he emphasized his wealth and won credit for a generosity that men admired.

At one time he planned to give a banquet at the St. Charles Hotel, to which every man who had ever lent him money should be invited. It was his plan to give to each of them a souvenir which might impress each with the conviction that in lending money to John Land he had made no mistake.

Napper Tandry had persuaded him not to do this.

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“Now that you are one of us,” he said, “you cannot afford to know these people except as the underlings of business. When you meet one of them, you can graciously remember his name, and ask how he is getting on, and all that; but you can’t afford to resume personal relations with such people. Jolly them, of course, to show that you’re not proud; ask each one of them if there is anything you can do for him, and let it go at that.”

John Land had a good deal of pleasure in carrying out this program. It was a gratification to his self-centred soul to look down upon a young man of whom he had once borrowed a few dollars, and be gracious and condescending enough to greet him cheerily and wish him well, and incidentally emphasize the vast difference there now was between the two. He usually wound up such meetings by saying:—

“You must be going, I suppose—can’t afford to be late at the office, eh? Same old grind? Oh, by the way, I’ve got to go, too—

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I'm to meet some tiresome financial people at the bank at ten o'clock. Good-by. Take care of yourself."

Nevertheless John Land was miserable. It was not because he had dishonestly got his money. That fact in itself would never have troubled him in the least. It was not that everybody around him knew or suspected his dishonesty. What does a man whose fortune is reckoned in six figures care about other people's opinions? It was only that John Land was a coward in his soul—too cowardly to meet the consequences of his own rascality with a brave front.

He did not dare invest his money in anything but government bonds which could be hidden away, lest the government should some fine morning ask him to give an account of himself.

He enjoyed posing among men of affairs as a capitalist whose assistance they needed, but it was only in surreptitious ways and under cover of some other person's name that he invested in their enterprises.

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The nights were the worst for him. He had a happy faculty of going to sleep promptly ; but he had an unhappy faculty of waking about three o'clock in the morning and thinking of things. The demon of cowardice beset him then. He would wonder what might happen should any active agent of the government learn what he had done and call it into question. As he lay there, half sleeping, half waking, he imagined his own arrest, his incarceration, his prosecution, perhaps with his Memphis partners as government witnesses. He remembered that he had allowed them none too large a share of his winnings. It was easy enough to imagine that they might turn against him upon a promise of exemption from punishment, tell the whole story, send him to prison, and themselves go scot free with their share of the booty. Indeed, if any trouble should come, that would be their obvious course of procedure. The government would need their testimony, and for the sake of it would give them immunity, dismissing them as minor and repentant offenders, though not asking them to bring

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forth fruits meet for repentance by restoring their share of the plunder.

All these and a thousand other phantasms haunted John Land in his dreams and beset his waking hours.

He secretly hired a house in Kentucky, just across the Ohio River, and another in Missouri, just across the Mississippi, and he used to sleep in one or the other of them when his fears haunted him too horribly to permit sleep to visit him in Cairo. He knew of course that the process of a United States court reaches into every State, but he had the comforting thought that a marshal seeking to serve such a process would go first to Cairo, and not finding him there, would wait to make inquiry, knowing nothing of his sleeping places in other States. That might give him time to run away.

By daylight John Land was far less nervous. He had established communication with Washington, and had made an arrangement there by which he was to be secretly notified by cipher telegram if any action should be taken looking toward an inquiry into his transactions. He

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had passage conditionally engaged upon every steamer sailing out of New York, and he kept his affairs in such shape that he could run upon an hour's notice. In the night-time these arrangements did not fully satisfy his mind, and therefore many of his nights were passed in Kentucky or in Missouri. Other nights and all his days he passed in Cairo, where he had delight in exploiting himself.

He had made acquaintance with Gabrielle Latour by mere chance, and he followed it up with a zeal that was admirable in its way. The girl fascinated him so far that he even ventured to visit her at Captain Will Hallam's house. He did so only once. Then Lida Hallam put her imperative feminine veto upon his further visits. She went with him to the door, and said to him :—

“You ought to understand, Mr. Land, and probably you do understand, that you are *persona non grata* in this house.”

That ought to have been enough even for John Land's assurance, but it was not.

“Oh, Mrs. Hallam,” he said, “you're not

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the kind to bear old grudges. Your suggestion would have been conclusive to me in those old days when I was Captain Will's clerk, but things have greatly changed since then. You surely do not mean to forbid me the house now that I am in a position to become Captain Will's associate in great business enterprises any day."

Lida Hallam looked at him out of those great brown eyes of hers and answered :—

"I don't know whether Captain Hallam will ever have business relations with you or not. That is his business. But you are to understand and remember that I forbid you to enter my door again. Now go, and don't again forget yourself."

But while Mrs. Hallam was bold and resolute of speech in thus dismissing her unwelcome guest, she was a woman who never needlessly talked in criticism of anybody. She therefore said nothing to Gabrielle concerning this matter or concerning John Land. She did not deem it necessary. It seemed to her enough that she had so peremptorily forbidden him the house.

As a consequence, Gabrielle had no reason

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to be on her guard against Land when she happened to meet him in other people's houses. She met him thus some time afterward, and he said something to her that had its effect upon her life. He had become an intimate of Ezra Brass, and Ezra Brass had given him certain information.

XXIV

A RATHER BAD NIGHT

WHEN Gabrielle Latour so abruptly left Hugh Marvin's presence after telling him, "You are the rightest man I ever knew or heard of," and still further avoided meeting him at supper, the young man had a season of self-communion.

Bidding his sister good night immediately after supper, he went first to his office and then to his bachelor rooms, where he sat late before the coal fire, thinking, questioning, wondering.

At first the girl's conduct puzzled him, but after a while he began to understand it, or he thought he did.

"After all," he thought, "perhaps I have been more successful than I have dared believe in my efforts to suggest to her mind the state

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of my feelings. Perhaps this evening's incident is a suggestion in response — utterly unintended of course. She would never think of giving me an intentional hint on such a subject. She would bite the end of her tongue off rather than that. What she said was said upon sudden impulse, just as one might say, 'Oh, thank you very much,' or anything of that kind. But the moment the words were out of her mouth she saw their possible misconstruction — or perhaps their right construction, who knows? The words and the sudden impulse that forced their utterance may have revealed to her something of her own state of mind, — something of which she had not herself been conscious until then. In that case her sudden running away and her refusal to present herself at the supper table are fully accounted for. Pride is the dominant characteristic of her nature. I shall never forget how, when she was nearly famished on the steamboat, she wanted to starve rather than accept the hospitality which she called my 'bounty.' Yes, that is a fair construction to put upon her con-

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duct to-night. She had betrayed herself, and she realized the fact."

This thought was one altogether pleasing to the young man. And yet he dared not accept it too confidently. There might be other explanations of what had happened, and the fear of these greatly modified the joy he felt in his previous thought. At last he rose impatiently and stood with his back to the fire.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed presently. "You're a coward, Hugh Marvin! I never suspected the fact before, but it is a fact!"

Then after a little he decided:—

"I'll solve the whole matter once for all. I'll go to her to-morrow like a man, and tell her of my feeling for her. I'll approach her with the courage that such a woman as she has a right to expect of any man asking for her hand — ugh! how I hate that phrase, at least in any case involving her. I shall not ask for her hand. I shall tell her I love her, and ask her to be my wife. I wish it were not so absolutely necessary for me to go down the river on the *Lady Gay*! Still, I don't know

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so well about that. Under certain circumstances that are not improbable it may be a relief to go away for a time. I wonder when the *Lady Gay* will be ready to sail!"

Looking up at the clock, he saw that it was nearly two in the morning. Time had passed more rapidly than he had realized.

"I'll go down to the office," he resolved. "I haven't paid the boys a late night visit for a week."

When he entered the office, he found the clerks sufficiently busy to satisfy his rather exacting ideas of duty.

"Has the *Lady Gay* arrived yet?" he asked his chief shipping clerk.

"Yes. She's at the wharf-boat — got in an hour ago, but hasn't yet finished taking on the freight there."

"Very well. When she gets that aboard, she will drop down to the warehouse for the main cargo. How much freight are we sending by her?"

"About a thousand tons."

"And her capacity is two thousand?"

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"Yes, if she loads to the guards. But a thousand is quite all the captain cares to carry, I imagine, with ice in the river; and at the present high freight rates, that's mighty good even for so big a boat."

"Yes, pretty good. How long will it take with her crew—I don't know how many roustabouts she has—how long will it take for her crew to get all the freight on board?"

"She ought to do it by ten o'clock this morning. But we can hurry matters by hiring a shore gang, if you like."

"No, don't hurry. By the way, you might give her all the hay in the warehouse, and that consignment of fifteen hundred barrels of lime for Memphis. That will give her a full load."

"Yes, a very full load. But if we do that, she simply can't get away before six o'clock in the evening."

"That doesn't matter. None of the freight we are giving her is on hurry orders."

"But she has brought thirty or forty passengers from St. Louis, and they are complaining already because of the delay for cargo here."

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They'll make the captain gray-haired if the boat is kept here eight hours longer than they have been told." And the clerk laughed.

"She's an unusually comfortable boat," answered Marvin. "They won't suffer. Tell the captain he is to take all the freight he can carry, and give it to him. Good night."

After he had gone, one of the younger clerks said to his senior:—

"Wonder what Mr. Marvin means by that? He didn't mean to ship the hay or the lime yet."

"He means that he wants the *Lady Gay* to lie here till six o'clock in the evening," answered the other.

"Wonder why?"

"Well, now let me advise you, in a fatherly sort of way, to stop wondering about Mr. Marvin's motives, if you don't want to go around hunting for a job about to-morrow. It's enough for us to know what he wants done, and do it. If you're not busy, go down to the wharf and tell the captain — no, he's a-bed — tell the mud clerk to tell him in the morning that we're

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going to give him all the freight he can carry.”

The clerk was right both in his conclusion that, for reasons of his own, Marvin wanted the steamboat to remain at Cairo until the next evening, and in his advice to the younger man not to inquire impertinently into Marvin's reasons for anything he might do.

There were no railroads at that time connecting Cairo with New Orleans. It was only by not very frequent steamboats—for the river traffic had not yet been fully opened—that one could make the journey, and Hugh Marvin was under a peremptory business necessity of going to New Orleans on the *Lady Gay*. But he felt himself under an equally pressing necessity to have his interview with Gabrielle Latour before leaving. For that reason he wanted the boat to remain until late afternoon, and to secure that, he had decided to ship a lot of freight which he had not intended to send forward at that time.

Having arranged to have it so, he returned to his rooms, where he lay awake for the re-

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mainder of the night trying to satisfy himself as to the correctness or incorrectness of his explanation of Gabrielle's unusual conduct.

He did not succeed in that, but he did succeed in making himself more distressingly nervous and anxious than he had ever been before in all his life.

XXV

SOME RESULTS OF "SUGGESTION"

THIS time the coming of morning brought with it no change in Hugh Marvin's purpose, though the weather was such that it might well have dampened any ardor. There was a cold, drizzling rain, with a biting air from the ice-full rivers. Marvin had intended to invite Gabrielle to ride with him that morning, but his first glance out of the window showed that to be out of the question.

He went to the hotel for breakfast instead, and afterward busied himself with affairs in his office, on his wharf-boat, and in his warehouses, and with preparations for his journey to New Orleans.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, wearing high boots and a rubber rain-coat, he mounted his horse and rode to his sister's house, plan-

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ning, as he went, what he would say to Gabrielle, and how he would say it.

"The weather is fortunate in one way," he thought. "I shall not find any of Lida's multitudinous callers there to-day to bar my way to a private talk with Gabrielle. As for Lida, a look will warn her to have business in the nursery."

Alas for human hopes! When Hugh Marvin walked into the Hallam house at a quarter past two o'clock, it was only to learn that his sister, with Gabrielle and the little people, had taken the one o'clock train for Chicago, where they expected to spend two or three days in shopping.

Hugh Marvin felt as if he had received an unprovoked blow in the face. For a moment he was stunned. Then for half a minute more he was angry.

"Why didn't Lida tell me of this last night when I was here for supper?" he asked himself. "Or why didn't Gabrielle mention it when we were talking, and before she ran away from me so strangely and so suddenly?"

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He stood there in the hallway as if dazed for more than a minute. Then the parlor maid, as if reading his mental questions in his features, answered them by saying:—

“It was very sudden, sir. They didn’t think of going till ten o’clock this morning, when Captain Hallam—he’s in Chicago you know—telegraphed them to come.”

“Oh, thank you!” answered Hugh. Then quitting the house, he mounted and rode slowly away.

Instead of going to his office, as ordinarily he would have done at this hour, he went to his rooms, touched a match to the kindling in the grate, changed his damp clothing for dry, and then sat down to write a letter which he had decided to leave for Gabrielle. He had thought of a new way to serve the woman he loved.

“I leave for New Orleans this evening,” he wrote, “on the steamer *Lady Gay*. I intended to tell you about it at supper last night, but to my regret, you did not appear at that meal. I wanted to tell you of some plans I

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have which may possibly enable me to serve you while I am down the river—and there were some other things I wanted to tell you."

Here he paused in his writing to say to himself, "I wonder if Lida would regard that as a satisfactory example of what she calls 'suggestion.' Perhaps my next sentence will add to its effectiveness in that way."

Then he resumed his writing.

"As I missed my chance last night, I rode up to the house to-day, to say good-by, to tell you of my plans for New Orleans, and to say the other things that are in my mind. As you had gone away, the good-by must remain unsaid, and I am going, in this letter, to tell you of my New Orleans plans, asking you to help me carry them out. As for the other things, they must wait till I get back, and I am sorry for that.

"Now these are my plans. My own business will keep me in New Orleans for a fortnight at least — perhaps for a longer time. I cannot hurry it, and as its progress from day to day must depend largely upon the activities of other men, I shall have abundant time on my hands.

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“Now matters in Louisiana are rapidly re-adjusting themselves to new and more orderly conditions, and it seems to me that it is high time that somebody should look up your interests there, both in New Orleans and up on the bayou. It may save further waste and damage to your inheritance if this is done now, before the final collapse of the Confederacy, which cannot be far off.

“If you will let me act for you in the matter, I shall be more than delighted, but in order that I may do so successfully I must have a little help from you. As soon as you return to Cairo, I want you, please, to send me a letter, to the address that I'll give you at the bottom of this sheet. In it I want you to tell me —

“1. Where your father's house in New Orleans is.

“2. What the name of the bayou plantation is, and as nearly as possible where it is located. You see I wasn't studying geography when I met you there.

“3. Do you know of any other property that your father owned in New Orleans or elsewhere

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in Louisiana? If so, please tell me all that you can about it, be it much or little.

"4. Tell me, if you can, or as nearly as you can, where your father's place of business was, and the style of his firm if he had partners.

"5. Tell me the names of any lawyers he employed, and any friends of his, if you can recall them.

"Finally, give me any other information you can that you think may aid me in my search.

"Send the letter as soon as you can. Then please send for my lawyers, Brown and Gilchrist, and ask one of them to come to you and draw up the necessary papers, authorizing me to act for you. I will see them before I leave, and they will know what is to be done. When the papers are signed and executed, the lawyers will forward them to me.

"And now good-by! When I get back we'll resume our rides together, I hope, and while I am gone, I beg that you will not let Hotfoot grow stiff for lack of exercise. I shall direct Moses to take her to you every morning when it doesn't pour down rain, and to take your

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orders to bring the mare to you at any other time of day that you may wish.

“Good-by again! and God bless and keep you.”

On her return from Chicago, two or three days later, Gabrielle received this letter and read it with feelings that perhaps she did not herself quite understand. It was significant, however, that she did not pass it over to Lida Hallam to read. On all previous occasions, when notes had come to her from Hugh Marvin, she had read them and immediately given them to Mrs. Hallam to read, that being the easiest and most natural way of informing her friend concerning their contents. This time she folded the letter instead, and thrust it into her corsage. She sat in silence and dreamily looked into vacancy for a while, before saying anything.

The fact did not escape Mrs. Hallam's keenly interested observation, but that wise woman said nothing. She did not even rouse the girl by looking at her as if in mute ques-

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tion. She was putting her own interpretation upon the facts, and it was a wrong interpretation.

"I wonder if Hugh has been stupid enough to pay his court by letter," she thought. "I sincerely hope not. That is about the most cowardly thing a man can do, and it deserves a rejection in every case. It will provoke one in this case if he has done that. Gabrielle Latour is not the girl to accept such an affront."

As she meditated thus, her companion shook off the revery into which she had fallen, and suddenly turning, drew forth the letter, saying:—

"Oh, Lida, I have a very important letter from your brother, Mr. Marvin."

Mrs. Hallam observed that the girl spoke of him as "your brother, Mr. Marvin," instead of saying only "Mr. Marvin" according to her usual practice. It was a small thing, but it had its meaning to one so sagacious and so sympathetic.

She observed, too, that as the girl opened the letter, she did not offer to hand it to her,

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but instead, went on to summarize its contents, using the sheet as a sort of memorandum.

“Well, that letter isn’t a declaration, at any rate,” reflected Mrs. Hallam. “Hugh would never mix up all that business with love affairs. And yet there is certainly something in the letter that the girl doesn’t care for me to see. Perhaps Hugh has been trying his hand at suggestion.”

All that she said was:—

“I hope you can give him enough information, Gabrielle, to enable him to succeed in his quest. It was nice of him to think of it.”

“It was greatly good of him,” answered the girl, with emotion, “and it was just like everything else he has done in my case. Lida, he is the best man in the world, I think, and certainly he has been a good friend to me.”

Mrs. Hallam looked into the girl’s suffused eyes as this was said, and she thought, “Well, he has succeeded in making his suggestions recognizable, at any rate.” Aloud she said:—

“How much information can you give him, Gabrielle?”

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"Not very much, I fear."

Then, after a pause, she added:—

"And yet, I suppose it may be enough for so able a man as he is to work upon. I can tell him where our house in New Orleans stands, and I think I can tell him enough to enable him to locate the plantation. As for the rest, I can't tell him anything. You see I was a very young girl, Lida, and I never knew anything about my father's business, except that he dealt in cotton and plantation supplies. It must have been a rather large business, as my father was regarded as a very rich man. We lived in a very large house set in the middle of a garden that occupied a whole city block. I know, because as a little girl I used to play among the orange and magnolia trees, and I used to climb to the top of the walls and look out, so that I know there were streets on all four sides. We had a big barn, too, with several carriages and a dozen or more horses in it. So I am sure my father must have had a large business, or he couldn't have lived in that way, could he?"

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"Certainly not. And it is fortunate that he was so prominent a business man, for so he must have been well known in New Orleans, and there must be at least some people there who remember him. Hugh will easily hunt those people up and they will tell him all they know."

"I'm glad of that, because I shouldn't like him to fail in anything he has undertaken."

There was seemingly not a thought in the girl's mind as to what Hugh Marvin's success or failure might mean to herself. Her concern was solely for him.

"Certainly Hugh hasn't failed in his effort to make his suggestions effective," thought Mrs. Hallam, with an inward chuckle of delight.

"Now I think I will go and answer his letter if you don't mind," said the girl, thrusting the sheet into her corsage again.

"Yes, that will be best. Hugh will be impatiently awaiting your reply, and there might be a steamboat along at any time now. So you'd better get your letter ready to-night, and in the

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morning I'll ask Will to send one of the lawyers up here to prepare the papers."

Gabrielle went at once to her room, but she did not go to her little writing desk. She sat before the grate instead and read Hugh Marvin's letter twice over. Perhaps she was trying to familiarize herself with its details so that she might not overlook anything of consequence in answering it. And yet, when she presently took it up for still another reading, she gave no attention at all to the business part of it, but only to that paragraph in which its author had three times mentioned those unexplained "other things" about which he was so impatient to talk with her.

After a while she let the letter drop into her lap, but still she sat there, gazing into the fire as if she saw a multitude of pleasing pictures there.

It was not until the little gilt clock on her mantelpiece tinkled out twelve that she roused herself from her revery and at last set to work writing.

It was not a very long letter when it was

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done, but the clock was on the stroke of two when she finished it, and the stock of note-paper in the box before her was running low. That was because she had burned so many sheets on which what she had written did not satisfy her. It is difficult for a sensitive woman to write to her own satisfaction when she is perturbed in mind and beset by the fear that her words may be too cold, and by the still more alarming apprehension that they may be too warm. In such a case there is sure to be a notable waste of paper, and the resultant missive is apt to be extremely unsatisfactory and perhaps misleading to its recipient.

XXVI

A YOUNG MAN'S MOODS

HUGH MARVIN received Gabrielle's letter, together with the legal papers, about a week after his arrival in New Orleans. As there was no regular or trustworthy mail service along the river at that time, the parcel was brought by the hand of a steamboat clerk whose first care upon landing was to deliver it.

Marvin was conscious of a distinct thrill of joyous expectancy as he opened the missive in his hotel room. But as he read it a feeling of disappointment came over him.

Precisely what he had expected to find in Gabrielle's letter it would have puzzled him to say. It would have puzzled him still more to explain, even to himself, why he should have expected to find anything there that he did

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not find. The letter thanked him gratefully for the interest he was taking in its writer's behalf, and assured him that she would always regard him as the best and most generous friend she had ever known. Then Gabrielle went on to give him as much as she could of the information for which he had asked, and finally she wound up with a reiteration of her heartfelt gratitude.

What more could the girl have written under the circumstances? Surely no man in his senses could have expected more. But perhaps Hugh Marvin, just at that time, could not have been said, in strict verity, to be a man in his senses. Perhaps the same is true of every man deeply in love. In spite of all his strength of body, mind, and character, Hugh was an exceedingly sensitive person at all times, and at this particular time he was even morbidly so.

There seemed to him to be somewhat too much of gratitude in the letter, and it seemed to him too cold and too distant in character. The letter, he said to himself, did not sound

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like Gabrielle. There was none of her piquancy of expression in it, none of that warm-blooded cordiality with which she had been accustomed to address him. It was such a letter as she might have written to any gentleman who was doing her a service and had asked her for certain information of a practical business nature.

As he thus analyzed the matter and his own feelings concerning it, the truth dawned upon his mind—the truth, namely, that the real cause of his disappointment lay in the fact that Gabrielle had not made even the most veiled and guarded reference to what he had written concerning “other things” that he wished to say to her. She had not even expressed curiosity to know what those “other things” might be.

As he meditated upon this matter a saner thought came to him.

“After all,” he argued, “perhaps that is a favorable indication. If she had thought those ‘other things’ to be business or merely social affairs, she would certainly have ex-

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pressed some desire to know what they were, or at the least, some curiosity concerning them. But if she understood or if she even remotely conjectured my meaning, of course she could not refer to the matter. She is far too proud a woman to invite a further utterance on such an occasion, or — what an idiot I am to be sure. I was trying to convey a ‘suggestion’ to her mind, and apparently I succeeded even better than I had hoped. She understands, or at the least she suspects, my meaning, and as a self-respecting woman she avoids all reference to the matter, and she will go on avoiding such reference until I speak out plainly. That accounts, too, for the guarded circumspection of her letter in all its parts. Lida was right. Gabrielle is not a woman to throw herself at any man’s head. Lida was right also when she called me a ‘stupid.’ ”

This wiser interpretation comforted the young man mightily, but it also increased his anxiety to close up his business in New Orleans and hurry back to Cairo. Now that he believed that Gabrielle understood his attitude, he was

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impatient to bring his fate to a crisis. But he must remain in New Orleans for yet another week or more, and meantime he busied himself with his quest for Gabrielle's property.

He had no difficulty in finding the New Orleans house that had been her home. It was occupied as headquarters by a military officer and his staff, — a fortunate fact. For while the house itself, and particularly its bare floors and its wall decorations, showed some signs of hard usage, the officers occupying it had been very scrupulous to prevent any avoidable injury, and especially they had protected the superb trees and shrubbery in the grounds.

As Hugh Marvin looked about him there, he saw everywhere evidences of wealth and of quietly luxurious living of that finer sort which men of ample means and unostentatious tastes are apt to practise. Under the jealous care of the appreciative officer who occupied the place as his headquarters all spoliation had been prevented. The furniture was unharmed except in so far as use had worn some of the upholstery threadbare. Such ornaments as had been

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found there were there still. Even the antique and richly wrought silver candlesticks — heirlooms probably — remained upon the mantelpieces, while the portraits and other pictures hanging upon the walls showed no other damage than such as dust must work when there is no woman present to prevent, except that some of them had holes in them as Gabrielle had told him.

Marvin was strongly impressed by the evidences of the family wealth. Of course the war must have reduced the Latour fortune very materially, but even with the negroes freed, the plantation upon the bayou must represent much, and on the return of peace, now so certainly at hand, this New Orleans mansion would of itself be worth a comfortable fortune, standing as it did in the very best quarter of the city.

It cannot be said that Hugh Marvin was altogether pleased with all this. He rejoiced, of course, to know that so much remained of Gabrielle's inheritance, for he had the records examined and in that way learned that there were no mortgage or other incumbrances upon the

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property; but the uncomfortable thought came to him that in proposing marriage to a young woman inheriting so much, he might be accused in men's minds of fortune-hunting, in spite of the fact that his own means were now ample and rapidly increasing. He deeply regretted that he had been by circumstances denied the privilege of saying those "other things," before learning definitely that Gabrielle was possessed of anything at all.

The thought did not trouble him long. He threw it off with the reflection that, however she might regard his suit on other grounds, Gabrielle would never entertain so unworthy a belief as that concerning him.

"As for other people," he reflected, "I can echo the sentiment expressed in that old motto which I observed carved in the wainscot of Gabrielle's house:—

"‘They say; they have said; they will be saying: Let them say on.’"

XXVII

JOHN LAND, COWARD

IT was about the time when Hugh Marvin was looking over the Latour homestead in New Orleans that John Land made the revelation referred to in an earlier chapter that very seriously disturbed the even current of Gabrielle's life.

In the course of a casual conversation, when they happened to meet at the house of one of Gabrielle's friends, Land, with seeming innocence of intent, asked her how long Hugh Marvin was expected to remain in New Orleans.

She answered quickly : —

"I really don't know, Mr. Land; I am not privy to Mr. Marvin's affairs."

There was just a trace of resentment in her tone.

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“Oh, no, of course not. I really didn't mean that you were. I only thought Mrs. Hallam might have told you. I've a little business matter on hand in which I am very anxious to interest Marvin, and so I naturally —”

“Oh, of course,” she interrupted. “I didn't mean to answer you curtly, but really I don't know when he will return. I'm only afraid he will stay longer than is convenient for him in order to attend to some matters of my own which he has kindly undertaken to look after.”

“That may very easily happen,” answered Land, speaking with seeming sincerity. “He is a very generous man. Indeed, I am counting upon that in the matter of which I spoke. You see he and I had a trifling misunderstanding the last time we talked together, but I am sure a man of his generosity of mind will forget and forgive when I take all the blame upon myself and ask him to let it go at that.”

“Of course I know nothing about that,” the girl answered; “I can only say that he is, as you say, a very generous man. He has been especially so to me in many ways.”

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"Yes; of course I have heard the story of those five bales of cotton. That was singularly —"

"What do you mean, Mr. Land? What bales of cotton?" asked the girl, with defiance in her voice and look.

"Oh, I mean the five bales he bought out of the cargo of his steamboat and sold for your account. Of course he has told you since of the little ruse."

Gabrielle bit her lip in an effort to repress an outburst. But she could not altogether refrain from angry speech. Paraphrasing Byron's line she merely said, as she looked straight into the man's eyes : —

"I feel that I must pardon your bad heart for your worse brains."

With that she turned from him without a further word, and presently she took leave of her hostess, managing to do so without revealing anything of her agitation.

Human motives are apt to be mixed, and John Land's were certainly so in this case. He was fascinated by Gabrielle's beauty and by her

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charm of voice and manner. He believed himself to be in love with her, and he was so — so far as it was possible for such a man as he to love anybody but himself. He was shrewd enough to understand how strong an impression Hugh Marvin's personality had made upon the girl, and he had discovered something of her spirit. He was sure that she would never knowingly have accepted such a benefaction at Marvin's hands, and he believed that upon learning the facts she would bitterly resent them. In that event, he argued, she would be mad with a desire to repay the money, and helpless to do so as to that part of it which she had already used.

This situation he thought might give him his opportunity. He would generously come forward with an offer to furnish her the money with which to make repayment. She would refuse, of course, to place herself under pecuniary obligation to him, and then, declaring his passion, he would ask her to put all questions of obligation out of the case by marrying him. He was weakly vain enough to think that no

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well-balanced young woman could refuse such an offer from a man so pleasing in appearance and so rich as he was.

This was his first purpose. His second was to revenge himself upon Hugh Marvin at all events.

When Gabrielle so suddenly interrupted him and left him with her bitter sarcasm in his ears, he had sense enough to see clearly that in his first purpose he had completely failed. But the girl's evident indignation convinced him that he had succeeded in the other.

"I have made a lot of trouble for Hugh Marvin, anyhow," he thought. "He won't be so handy with his inkstands next time he sees me."

That thought suggested another and a far less comfortable one. What would Hugh Marvin do when he should learn what had happened? John Land did not know, and could not guess, but as he lay in bed that night, his imagination ran riot in uncomfortable conjectures. He knew something of Hugh's temper, and he greatly feared it. He was convinced that in one way or another Hugh Marvin would

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call him to account and punish him. He believed that it was even possible that Hugh would kill him on sight, if he ever learned of this thing. "Nobody ever can tell what a hot-headed Kentuckian will do under provocation," he thought. But that Hugh would wreak some sort of vengeance upon him he could not doubt, and, as there was no telegraphic service up and down the river, there was no knowing at what hour a steamboat from New Orleans, with Hugh Marvin on board, might make her landing at Cairo.

John Land soon wrought himself into a condition of mental torture even worse than any that he had ever known before. It was not only that he could not sleep, he could no longer remain in bed. Cold as the night was, he was sweating like a bedevilled beast.

Hastily changing his nightgown for a fresh one, he wrapped himself in a warm dressing robe, thrust his feet into fur-lined slippers, and rang for the hotel attendant to kindle a fire in the grate. Meanwhile he paced the floor in an agony of fear.

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"Has any steamboat come in from below?" he rather piteously asked the fire-maker.

"I dunno, sir. I'se been asleep for two hours till you rung de bell."

"Oh, it's no matter," answered Land. His question had been prompted by the sudden thought that Hugh Marvin might land at any moment and come at once to the hotel upon vengeance bent. Reflection showed him the utter absurdity of that apprehension. He reminded himself that even if Marvin should land that night, he could know nothing of what had happened until he should see Gabrielle.

While the man was busied about the fire, John Land was a trifle less wretched than before. Somehow human presence—even that of a negro servitor—seemed to lighten his burden of apprehension. It implied or suggested human sympathy. But when the man had gone, the old agony of fear came back in full force.

John Land was a coward all over and clear through. It is never the instinct of the coward to face danger and fight it. His impulse



WHILE THE MAN WAS BUSIED ABOUT THE FIRE, JOHN LAND
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always is to run away in some fashion — to hide, to skulk, to lie out of the difficulty. Accordingly Land presently thought of a way out, and he determined at once to take it. His thought was that if he could in any way prevent Hugh Marvin from learning of his agency in this matter, he must escape that dangerous man's wrath.

He went to his desk and wrote a piteous appeal to Gabrielle. He protested that he had not intended the wrong he had done. He assured her on what he called his "word of honor" that he had not doubted for a moment that she already knew of Marvin's "generous little ruse." Otherwise, he swore to her, he would very certainly never have mentioned the matter in her presence. He besought her forgiveness. He begged her to be generous enough not to let Marvin know what had occurred. Finally he told her that he must remain in agonizing apprehension until she should graciously send him a line to assure him of her forgiveness and her silence.

The tall clock in the corner of his room

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rang out four on its deep, resonant bell, as he sealed and addressed this note. Several hours must elapse before he could send it by a messenger to the Hallam house, and they must be hours of torture to John Land.

With every hour his apprehensions increased and his agony of mind grew harder and harder to bear. Finally, at half-past seven in the morning, he sent a messenger with the letter, thinking, "They are early risers at the Hallams', and probably they have finished breakfast by this time."

In fact the missive was handed to Gabrielle while she sat at breakfast with the Hallams. She was not familiar with Land's handwriting, but she saw his embossed monogram—for he was particular about his stationery—on the lapel of the envelope, and knew from whom the letter had come. Turning to her hostess she asked:—

"Lida, may the messenger who brought this come into the dining room for a moment?"

"Certainly, dear. Bring the man in, Matilda."

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When the messenger entered, Gabrielle held out the unopened letter, saying :—

“Take that back to John Land.”

“What shall I say to him, Miss?” asked the man, in perplexity.

“Anything you like. I have no messages for him.”

The negro man stopped and stood in helpless bewilderment. He had delivered many letters in his time, but nothing of this character had ever happened to him before. The situation was one with which he knew not how to deal. Gabrielle helped him out by saying :—

“I told you to go.”

The man turned and slowly shuffled out of the room, like one in a daze. As he passed out through the door he ejaculated, “’Fore de Lawd !”

Captain Will Hallam had suspended his breakfast during this little colloquy. When the messenger had gone, he turned to Gabrielle and said in even tones :—

“If that fellow has been annoying you in

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any way, Gabrielle, I'll see that he leaves Cairo by the noon train never to return. You've only to say the word."

"He has not annoyed me — at least, not in the way you mean, but — oh, Captain Hallam, I cannot explain."

"You needn't explain," he answered, as Gabrielle, in manifest agitation, excused herself and left the room.

"On the whole, Lida," continued Captain Hallam, quite as if he had been speaking of some contemplated change in the garden or the stable, "I think I'll send him out of Cairo anyhow. I've an idea that the general health of the city will be better without him, and I'm at the head of the Health Board, you know."

"Obviously he has been annoying Gabrielle in some way. Yes, I think you'd better suppress him as a nuisance," answered Mrs. Hallam, who had the fullest possible faith in her husband's ability to do anything he might be minded to do.

"After all," she added, "it is partly my fault that he has had opportunity to annoy

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Gabrielle. I should have warned her against him when he called on her here and I ordered him not to come again. I didn't want to distress her then, but I was wrong in that. She is terribly distressed now over something, I don't know what."

"Suppose you find out," answered Captain Hallam, whose confidence in his wife's sagacity and persuasiveness was as great as hers in his mastery of men and situations.

XXVIII

GABRIELLE'S DETERMINATION

ON her return to the Hallam house after her encounter with John Land, Gabrielle had been fortunate enough to meet no one in the hallway or on the stairs. She had thus been able to go to her own room unobserved. What might have happened if she had encountered Mrs. Hallam at that moment she shrank from imagining, for her agitation and her distress were extreme. But by force of her resolute will she so far mastered herself that when she sat down to the supper table, no person less sagaciously observant than Mrs. Hallam would have discovered that anything was amiss. Gabrielle entered freely into the table-talk and carried on her part of it with spirit, especially that part of it which brought the children into the conversation.

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Indeed, she put too much of vivacity into her talk, and it was that which led Mrs. Hallam to suspect that she was emotionally disturbed in some way. It was Gabrielle's habit always to talk vivaciously, but on that evening she chattered, very much as she had done with Hugh when they two first met on the banks of the bayou. Mrs. Hallam promptly discovered a false note in her conversation, and saw that she was assuming a greater liveliness than usual as a veil to some deeper feeling that she desired to conceal. But Mrs. Hallam gave no hint of her discovery.

"She will tell me about it when she is ready," reflected that wise and loving woman.

After supper, Gabrielle went to the piano and played dance music for the little people, as she was accustomed to do of evenings. When they had danced themselves tired, she sent them off to bed, and, excusing herself, went to her own room.

There she threw aside her assumed gayety and sat down to think. She felt that her life was at a crisis, and she had not yet wrought out

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a definite purpose from the whirl of impulses that were struggling for place in her soul.

Her first feeling had been one of anger and resentment. She had been tricked, insulted, humiliated by the man in whose friendship she had so loyally confided. A little further reflection served to soften this feeling and to modify somewhat her view of the facts upon which it rested. As she sat there in her room, trying to think the matter out and to decide upon a course of action, she could not help seeing clearly that, whatever error of judgment Hugh Marvin might have fallen into in his effort to serve her, his constant purpose had been to minister to her welfare.

"He has not meant to humiliate me," she argued. "He has only sought to make me happy, and he has done so during all these many months as nobody else ever did. He has been unspeakably considerate and strangely unselfish. Such a friendship I never knew before."

Then came the question : —

"Is it friendship that has inspired him in all this, or is it — something else?"

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As if to satisfy herself on this point, she took Hugh's recent letter from its receptacle, and read it over again several times. There was certainly a hint in it of that "something else," but there was at least a possibility of misinterpretation on that head, and the sensitive girl felt a wave of fresh humiliation sweep over her as she realized that perhaps she had permitted herself to read more into the letter than its writer had intended. This thought brought back all the old shame in full measure. It reminded her that she had been living upon this man's bounty—leading a life of dependence upon a stranger who owed her nothing, and whose first impulse, she was satisfied, had been one of pity for her forlorn condition.

With that thought her anger and resentment revived. She resented the thought that anybody should dare pity her. She felt that between his pity and the gift of money he had made to her he had forced her to become, unwittingly, an object of charity—a pauper, she called it in her mind.

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Again her sense of justice pleaded for Hugh Marvin in answer to these accusations. She could not escape the fact that his motives had been altogether kindly and very generous. The circumstances would have worn a much uglier aspect if Hugh could have foreseen the possibility that she would ever come to know what he had done for her. In that case the accusation would have lain against him that he had unjustly subjected her to humiliation and shame. As it was — well, she could not confidently judge his conduct. So she read his letter again, without clearing up the matter.

There remained the much more practical question of what she should now do. She could return the greater part of the proceeds of the gift of cotton, and that she would do, of course. But she had no possible means of repaying that part of the money which she had already used. If she could have done that, her course would have been clear. In that case she would pay the debt and instantly go away in search of work, but carrying her trusty creese in her corsage.

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In any case she was resolved never to see Hugh Marvin again, a resolution formed not so much in resentment as in shame. She felt that she could not bear to stand before him now and look into his eyes, knowing what benefits she had accepted at his hands.

When John Land's letter came to her at breakfast the next morning, a new and sharper feeling of disgrace seized upon her. She knew nothing of what the letter contained, but the fact that that man had presumed to send her any letter at all, expecting her to read it, seemed to her an indication of her loss of respectability as a woman. This man, who knew that she had been the recipient of charity, and who supposed that she had known and consented to the situation, evidently assumed that her self-respect had been completely cast aside. Otherwise he would not have thought of writing to her after what had passed between them on the day before.

And if John Land knew that she had accepted charity at Hugh Marvin's hands, it was certain, she thought, that everybody else in Cairo knew of it. Instantly she made up her

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mind to go away from Cairo and hide herself out of sight of its people.

When she left the breakfast table and went to her room, it was her purpose to carry this resolution into effect at once. She set to work packing a small trunk, meaning to leave on an afternoon train that day for Chicago. What she would do when she got there she did not know, but there were many things, she thought, that might be done. Perhaps she could secure nursing to do, though that was doubtful, as she would have nobody to vouch for her character. There were much humbler employments for which she would need no recommendation. She would find work of some sort. If not, she had the creese.

Having packed her little trunk, she sat down to figure up her bank-book. That done she drew a check payable to Hugh Marvin for every dollar that remained to her credit. She had enough in her purse to pay her fare and provide her with food and lodging of the cheapest kind for a few days, and that was all she would take.

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Then she sat down to write a letter to Hugh Marvin. But after several attempts she gave that up and wrote only a line or two, saying :—

“Here is my check for all I have left of your money.”

This she enclosed with the check in an envelope which she addressed to Marvin.

She had now only to say good-by to Lida Hallam, but that, she felt, was the most difficult task of all.

As she was nerving herself to its performance, there was a knock at her door, and Mrs. Hallam entered, bearing a letter for the girl.

“I think I ought not to read it,” said Gabrielle, after she had glanced at the envelope. “It is from Mr. Marvin.”

XXIX

HUGH MARVIN'S DISCOVERY

HAVING learned all he could with respect to Gabrielle's New Orleans property, Marvin sought out a lawyer whom he could trust and laid before him the question of what had best be done by way of recovering possession of it for her, or at the least establishing her legal right to her inheritance. The lawyer advised that no steps be taken with respect to the matter until the war should be completely at an end. Until that time, he pointed out, it could not be known what would be the status of the Southern States or of their people. Something like orderly government had been set up in and around New Orleans, and measures were already on foot for the restoration of Louisiana to the Union. But that had not yet happened. The

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State was still under military control, and the authorities that were ruling it could not know upon what terms the restoration would be made. There might be a wholesale proscription of those who had served in the Confederate army, as Gabrielle's father and brothers had done. There might be a general confiscation of the property of such persons. A score of things might happen. Nobody could tell, and, of course, with matters in so unsettled and uncertain a condition, it would be impossible to recover the property by establishing Gabrielle's title to it. Any effort to do so might do harm. It could certainly do no good.

"The only prudent thing to do now," advised the lawyer, "is to get all the information you can, and then wait."

Acting upon this advice, Hugh set to work, with the aid of his lawyer, to find out what he could respecting the plantation on the bayou. He discovered its locality, and at considerable risk to himself he visited the place. He found it to be very large and very rich in its soil, with important timber growths on

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parts of it. The buildings had all been burned, as we know, but the land, favorably situated as it was, was very valuable, or would be so when peace and civil government should come again.

Hugh found, however, that the plantation was in large part occupied by negro refugees who had been settled there as squatters by the military authorities.

"There again," his lawyer said to him upon hearing the facts, "there again is a reason, and a very important one, for waiting before moving in the matter of recovery. Any attempt of that sort made now would threaten disturbance to the colonizing arrangements of the military authorities, and they would stoutly resist. They would very probably endeavor even to secure some act confiscating the property, and in the present temper of Congress such an effort might be easily successful."

One morning Hugh received a note from a business house unknown to him. It was guardedly written, and it asked him to call upon the head of the firm whose signature it bore.

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It gave no reason for the request and offered no explanation to show him why he should give it any attention. He supposed that the firm wished to establish business relations of some sort with his Cairo house, as he was now a large shipper of grain and other products to the Southern city. But if such were the purpose, he could not understand why the note was so guardedly written, or why it gave no hint of the purpose of the requested visit.

As he had nothing to conceal, however, he decided to call upon the firm. When he did so, the senior member of the house — a man younger than himself — invited him into a private office and for a time talked of the weather, the city, the rapidly developing river commerce, and other matters of a general and inconsequent nature. After a little he asked Hugh about his own Cairo business and listened with close attention to all that the young man said in reply. He asked particularly what commission houses in New Orleans were Marvin's correspondents. He made a note of the names, and then turned to Hugh, saying:—

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“I must explain, Mr. Marvin, that the matter about which I asked you to call is one of considerable delicacy—involving perhaps the interests of others. I must go cautiously, therefore, and be sure of my ground. Will you pardon me if I say nothing about this affair at present? And will you permit me to call upon you at your hotel this afternoon? I think I shall then be in position to talk with less reserve than I feel bound to maintain at present.”

Frank, open-minded, and courageous as he was, Hugh Marvin could not understand the man's reticence, and for the moment he was disposed to resent it. He reflected, however, that some men are constitutionally cautious; that some men practise reserve for the sake of exalting the importance of the affairs they have in hand; and finally, that this man had intimated that he was acting for others in a matter of extreme delicacy. He therefore put aside his resentment so far as to name an hour for the proposed call. He would not himself have visited the man again without a

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fuller understanding of the occasion for doing so, but he consented to receive the merchant at his hotel at the hour appointed.

When his visitor arrived, Hugh observed a considerable relaxation in his manner.

"I must thank you for giving me this interview, Mr. Marvin," he said after the greetings of courtesy were over. "And I must apologize for what may have seemed to you a strange reticence this morning. The matter about which I have now come to talk with you involves the interests of others in a vital way, and you were a stranger to me. I asked you for the names of your correspondents in New Orleans, and I asked you to postpone this interview in order that I might satisfy myself concerning you by making inquiries of them."

"Well, are you satisfied?" asked Hugh, with just a trace of impatience in his tone.

"Oh, yes, entirely. Now let me come to the point. You have been making somewhat careful inquiries, I learn, concerning the property of the late Étienne Latour. May I ask you in whose interest you have done this?"

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Instantly Hugh Marvin's caution was aroused in its turn.

"Pardon me," he answered, "if I, too, must practise a little caution. I may say to you that my concern with this matter also involves the vital interests of others. I cannot, with propriety, answer your question until I know why and in whose interest it is asked."

"That I am now prepared to tell you," answered the visitor. "I am acting for Étienne Latour's only surviving son, Pierre Latour."

Hugh rose to his feet in his astonishment. He advanced, and placing his face close to that of his visitor, looked him in the eyes with a searching, questioning scrutiny. Presently he said:—

"But Pierre Latour is dead. He fell at Gettysburg."

"He fell at Gettysburg," answered the other, "but he is not dead. He is alive, and is now in hiding in New Orleans."

"Tell me the whole story," said Hugh, sinking again into his chair.

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"I will," answered the other; "for I have satisfied myself as to your honor and your discretion, and I may trust you even with the secrets of another. Pierre Latour fell at Gettysburg, wounded apparently beyond hope. Four canister balls struck him. Two of them passed through his body; one mangled his left foot and another crushed his left knee. He was picked up by the Federals, whose surgeons amputated his leg and treated his other wounds. They had little hope of saving his life, but they did their best, and the boy's extraordinary vitality mightily helped them. He lay in hospital until a month or two ago, when his slowly healing lungs—through which one of the missiles had passed—began to manifest symptoms of an alarming character. Otherwise he was growing better, and the surgeons determined to send him out of the Northern winter to the milder climate of his native city. He was brought South on a hospital ship and placed in the prison hospital which is maintained here for wounded and convalescent prisoners of war.

"The change proved altogether good for him,

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and he rapidly gained strength. But his mind was so ill at ease as to retard recovery. He had left his only sister in New Orleans, and he could not learn what fate had overtaken her. I was permitted to visit him—for he and I had been schoolmates and comrades before the war, and I had remained a Union man, so that the authorities here made no objection when he asked to see me. In his behalf I made inquiries concerning his sister. I could learn only that she, with an aunt who had charge of her, was living on the Latour plantation when a raiding party sacked and burned the place. Beyond that I could discover no trace of the young woman, and I so reported.

“But Pierre was not satisfied. He thought that if he could in any way get out of the prison hospital and direct the search himself, he might succeed where I had failed. He had but one leg, of course, and he was still suffering considerably from his wounds, but once out of prison he would be free, he thought, to send out letters of inquiry, and consult with such friends as he might discover to be in New Orleans. Of

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course he could not do that from the hospital prison.

“Accordingly I made every effort to secure his parole, and I should have succeeded but for one thing. There is a secret organization among New Orleans women, and has been ever since the city was captured. Its purpose is to aid in the escape of Confederate prisoners and their return to the army. The organization has an almost perfect system of communication by signals, and as it has close relations with several steamboat captains who are Southern in their sympathies, it has been easy for them, whenever a prisoner has escaped, to send him up the river, land him somewhere in the woods, and enable him to make his way into the Confederate lines.

“Of course a man so crippled as Pierre Latour is could not do that, but the military authorities have feared to release even crippled prisoners on parole within the city, lest they aid in this work. Military men are apt to take short cuts, you know, and in this matter they have spared themselves the trouble of discriminating by simply refusing to parole any prisoner whatever.

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“But in some way, I don’t know how, Pierre Latour managed to communicate with this organization of women, and as there is no great watchfulness exercised over the hospital prison, that has only badly wounded men for its inmates, they succeeded in effecting Pierre’s escape and smuggling him into my house.

“The excitement of the escape, and the undue exertion attending it, brought on an excess of fever, but he recovered from that, and he has been engaged ever since in prosecuting inquiries for his sister by such means as are open to one in hiding. That is the whole story. When I learned of your activity and told him of it, he begged me to find out who you were, and what were your motives. He thought, as I did, that you were making your inquiries concerning the Latour property with a view to its confiscation or something of that sort. But there was a chance—a remote one, perhaps—that you knew his sister’s whereabouts, and were acting in her behalf.”

There was a distinct note of interrogation in the man’s utterance of the last sentence.

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"That conjecture," Hugh answered, "was entirely correct."

The man sprang from his chair, grasped Marvin's hand with warmth, and eagerly said :—

"Tell me, where is she? And how is she? And what are her circumstances? This is good news, and it will make Pierre almost well again. Tell me, please!"

"You may tell the young man that Miss Gabrielle Latour is living with my sister in Cairo, Illinois; that she is perfectly well, is abundantly provided with money of her own, and is surrounded by friends who love her very dearly. But why may I not go to the young man myself? Why may I not have the pleasure of telling him the good news?"

"That would never do," answered the other. "It might arouse suspicion and lead to Pierre's arrest. But I will be your messenger, and, if I may, I will come back here this evening to bring you his message in reply."

Hugh gladly assented, and after an impressive parting the visitor took his leave, promising to come again in the evening.

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Hugh Marvin's eagerness to communicate all his good news to Gabrielle was naturally very great, but it was baffled by the circumstances of the time. There was none but a government military line of telegraph from New Orleans northward, and that was reserved exclusively for official use. Hugh made an effort to secure the transmission of a despatch by this line, but the prohibition was positive and unyielding. Fortunately there was a steamboat at the levee, which would leave the next morning for Cairo, and Hugh was well acquainted with her officers, as he was indeed with all the river men whose boats were accustomed to carry his cargoes. He sat down, therefore, as soon as his visitor left him, and wrote a letter for the clerk of the steamboat to deliver in Cairo. It was this letter that Mrs. Hallam delivered into Gabrielle's hands on the morning after her encounter with John Land. It was this letter of good news that Gabrielle hesitated to read.

XXX

FRIGHT AND FLIGHT

FEAR "walketh in darkness," and cowardice is at its worst in the watches of the night.

When John Land had sent off his missive to Gabrielle, he went down to his breakfast a good deal comforted. Human presence itself is somehow a source of reassurance to the timid soul, and so when he entered the hotel dining room, nodding to one acquaintance after another as he advanced to his accustomed seat near the farther end of the great apartment, Land found his fears rapidly leaving him and his self-confidence returning. There in the dining room, among so many people who were not disposed to do him harm, he felt that his imaginings of the night before had been, if not altogether without occasion, at least ex-

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aggerated. He felt, rather than thought, that no harm would come to him.

Two other things contributed to his reassurance. Contrary to his custom, he had taken a before-breakfast dram, by way of steadying his nerves, and he had taken an active measure of self-defence by writing to Gabrielle. Under all these reassuring influences his optimistic self-confidence returned, and he was sure that Gabrielle would send him a message promising to keep her own counsel with regard to what had happened.

"She can hardly do otherwise," he thought, "when she learns how distressed I am at the thought of having given her pain, and how anxious I am that the matter shall go no further."

But just as he was beginning to eat the breakfast which the attendant had brought to him, the negro messenger approached and laid his unopened letter before him without speaking.

"What does this mean?" Land asked in a tone that seemed to imply some fault or misconduct on the messenger's part.

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"Dunno, sir," answered the negro, doggedly.

"Why didn't you deliver the letter to the young lady in person?"

"Dat's jes' what I done been and done, sir."

"Then how is it that it comes back unopened?"

"Reckon dat's 'case de young lady didn't open it, sir."

"What did she say?"

"She jes' looken' at de letter an' han' it back to me, an' she done say, 'Take dat back to John Land,' dat's all, sir."

"Why didn't you ask her what you should say to me about it?"

"I done do dat, sir."

"Well, what did she say? Go on, you block-head, and tell me all about it."

"Well, sir, when I done axed her what to say to you, she straightened up, proud and highty-tighty-like, an' she says, says she, 'Anything you like, I ain't got no messages to sen';' an' then she tole me to go, an' I said, 'Fore de Lawd,' an' dat's all dere was to it."

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Land pushed away his plate and left the dining room. As he entered the hotel office, a bell-boy carrying a card on a tray met him and held out the bit of pasteboard. On it was inscribed, "G. W. Rukensdorff, M.C.," for that accidental statesman still called himself a member of Congress, though he had ceased to be such many moons before.

"Show him up to my room at once," said Land, as he himself started up the stairs.

"Reckon Mr. Land mus' be feelin' bad dis mornin'," said the servitor to one of his comrades.

"What makes you think dat?"

"'Case he didn't stay in de dinin' room long enough to git his breakfas', an' now he's as white as a ghos'."

John Land was not ill, in any ordinary sense, but he was certainly feeling worse than a very ill man might. Gabrielle's curt return of the unopened letter had brought back to him all the apprehensions and disturbed imaginings of the night. He instantly interpreted it to mean that she was even angrier with him than

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he had feared, and that she was only biding her time to report the whole matter to Hugh Marvin on his return. Now had come Rukensdorff's card, and the desire of that personage to see him filled him with fear on another score. He had already had some dealings with the ex-congressman, and he knew both his purposes and his methods.

As an ex-member of Congress, Rukensdorff had what is called the "privilege of the floor." That is to say, he was free, as outsiders are not, to enter the House while it was in session. Availing himself of this privilege, he had set himself up in Washington as a professional lobbyist. He called his work "influencing legislation," and in fact he did influence legislation now in a far larger measure than he had ever been able to do while actually a member of Congress.

By way of facilitating his business, he had reconciled himself with the man Avalon, who had defeated and succeeded him. He had accurately taken the moral measure of this his successor, and felt that they two, acting

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together, could "do business" with profit to both.

Early in the session Avalon had introduced a resolution, reciting that there were rumors of frauds perpetrated upon the government in connection with the preparation and shipment of captured cotton, and directing a congressional inquiry into the matter.

There were no names mentioned in the resolution, but John Land understood, and he hurried to New York, from which port there were frequent sailings. There Rukensdorff had met him and proposed to arrange the matter "for a consideration." Avalon had secured the reference of his resolution to a committee of which he was himself a member, and Rukensdorff explained that it would be easy for Avalon to let the thing die in committee, if Land would "make it worth his while."

"These things are quite customary," he urged; "you see every committee has more business before it than it can attend to, and so if the mover of a resolution or the introducer of a bill doesn't call it up, it simply goes to sleep."

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On that occasion John Land had furnished Rukensdorff a financial sleeping potion to be administered to Avalon's resolution, and he had hoped that that would be the end of the matter. But there is always this difficulty about paying blackmail,—that the payment must be repeated and increased from time to time if it is to remain effective.

So when John Land received Rukensdorff's card at the hotel in Cairo that morning he shrewdly suspected the purpose of the visit.

When the ex-congressman opened the conversation, his manner was noticeably less persuasive and more confident than it had been on the former occasion.

"Have you seen that, Mr. Land?" he asked, handing the other a newspaper and pointing to a marked paragraph.

Land anxiously read the despatch, which revealed that a certain member of Congress, not Avalon, had on the day before asked in open session why the Avalon resolution had not yet been reported out of committee.

"The session is nearing its end," he had gone

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on to say, "and if we intend to hunt down these cotton thieves, we must act at once. If we do not appoint a committee to investigate during the recess, there is the gravest danger that the evidence may disappear, or that in some other way the matter may be dropped."

The despatch went on to say that Avalon had explained the delay by saying that he had not yet been able to lay before the committee a sufficiently definite statement to warrant a report of the resolution for the consideration of the House, but that he hoped to do so without much further delay.

When Land had read the passage through, he turned to Rukensdorff, saying :—

"I paid you to suppress this thing, and you promised to do so."

"I have done all that I promised," jauntily answered the other. "I promised to see to it that Avalon should not stir the matter up in committee, and I have kept my word. You see Avalon has done not a thing in the matter. But neither he nor I nor both of us together could prevent this other fellow from putting his

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oar in. Even when he did so, you observe Avalon did all he could to quiet him by his explanation, and so nothing was done about the thing. But I know the man who tried to stir the matter up. He's a sharp fellow, and he's on the make. He'll wait for a few days to see if anybody catches on and ponies up. If they don't, he'll have another try. He'll move to instruct the committee to report Avalon's resolution to the House for consideration. So there's no time to lose."

"Can you handle him?" asked Land.

"Yes, I think so; but he'll want big money, and he won't take anything less. You see if he can't get his price, it will pay him better to press the matter to an issue, and in that way make a reputation for himself as a 'terror to evil-doers.' Then next time his chance comes, the people concerned will see the point and pay his price."

By this time the clammy sweat of the night before had begun again to ooze through John Land's skin.

At that moment, and before he could decide

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what to say or what to do, there came a rap at the door, and a messenger entered bearing a note. Land recognized the handwriting on the envelope, and he hastily tore it open. Within was a very brief note which read:—

“JOHN LAND:

“It is my desire that you leave Cairo to-day. I enclose the new time-table of the Illinois Central, showing the hours of departure of the several trains.

“WILLIAM HALLAM.”

John Land perfectly understood what that meant, and he knew that he must obey the mandate. He had not forgotten the circumstances under which he had left Captain Hallam's service, and he knew what means his former employer had of enforcing his decree of banishment.

He instantly came to a decision. Turning to Rukensdorff, he said:—

“You must give me a little time to think. I must have time to arrange for all this. One naturally can't put his hands on such a wad of

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ready money as this affair will require, without a little time."

"But this thing won't wait," answered the other. "I must leave Cairo for Washington by the midnight train."

"Very well, then," said Land, as if reflecting. "Suppose you call here at seven o'clock this evening. There'll be time enough between then and midnight to arrange matters between us, and in the meanwhile I'll get my affairs in shape so as to be ready to settle the financial part of the matter."

So agreeing, the visitor took his leave. Land was not deceived by any of his pretences. He saw clearly that Avalon and Rukensdorff were acting together for the purpose of "bleeding" him, as he phrased it; that Avalon's resolution had been introduced in the first place for the sole purpose of extorting money from him; and that now, in order to extort another and greater sum, these two had associated a third congressman with them — the one who had made the inquiries on the day before.

"It's a set-up job," he muttered as his visitor

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was descending the stairs, "and the worst of it is, there is no end to such a game. If I pay this time, presently they'll take in a fourth partner and demand a still bigger pile. It'll go on so till I'll be a squeezed lemon. There is only one way out of it. There's a Cunard steamer sailing Saturday morning early. I can catch her if I have good luck."

He looked at his watch.

"Nine o'clock. The express train leaves at 10.10. I must hustle."

Instantly he sat down and wrote a note to be delivered to Rukensdorff when he should call at seven in the evening. In it he explained that he had been suddenly and peremptorily called to Washington on another matter, adding:—

"Come to me at Willard's when you reach the capital. I'll have everything in shape then for an immediate settlement. In that way we shall lose no time by reason of my inability to meet you this evening as arranged."

Having sealed this note he addressed it, writing on the envelope, "The hotel clerk

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will please deliver this to the Hon. Mr. Rukensdorff, when he calls to see me this evening. J. L.”

Leaving the note on his desk, — for he did not intend to place it in the clerk’s hands until the last moment, lest by some chance Rukensdorff should happen in to the hotel and receive it prematurely, — Land went to Napper Tandry’s bank, and secured a large japanned tin box which he had deposited in the vault there for safe keeping. He also checked out of the bank pretty nearly all the large sum of money which he had on deposit there.

Then, returning to the hotel, he locked the door, opened the tin box, and stuffed the great mass of government bonds that it contained into a large hand-bag. Packing the box full of old newspapers and the like, he returned to the bank and asked that it be again deposited in the vault.

He next packed a trunk, and at the last moment paid a porter to take it to the train, while he, carrying the large hand-bag and

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a smaller one which held necessary toilet articles, walked the small distance between the hotel and the station. As he passed the hotel office he left the note for delivery to Rukensdorff, and hurriedly asked the clerk to have the carpets in his rooms cleaned and relaid during his "brief absence in Washington."

He was so like a hunted fox, and his cowardice conjured up so many terrifying imaginings, that he even purchased his ticket for Washington, by way of concealing his real destination. He could buy another ticket for New York at Chicago.



“TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT, DEAR,” SHE SAID IN HER WINNING WAY.

XXXI

TWO WOMEN

“**B**UT why not, dear?”

That was Lida Hallam's question in answer to Gabrielle's statement that she thought she ought not to read Hugh's letter. She spoke in even, level, gentle tones that expressed no emotion, not even surprise. Then she waited for the girl to answer.

For a time Gabrielle did not speak. Presently Mrs. Hallam sat down by her side on the little sofa, passed her arm around the girl, and caressingly drew her to herself.

“Tell me about it, dear,” she said in her winning way.

The girl responded to the caress by laying her head upon the other's breast and bursting into tears.

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Lida Hallam was far too wise a woman to attempt any interference with the weeping. She knew that unrestrained tears are to a passionate woman what the safety valve is to a steam boiler. So she sat still, caressing the head that lay upon her bosom, and letting the passion of the woman's soul expend itself in weeping.

At last, with a sort of shake, as if to throw off a load, the girl sat up and said:—

"Yes, that will be best—to tell you all about it. For you, at least, love me, do you not, Lida?"

"You know," was the sufficient answer.

Then another and a distressing thought arose in Gabrielle's mind. She arose to her feet, as she always did when under excitement. Facing her friend with an intent gaze, she asked:—

"Lida, have you known all along that I was living on Hugh Marvin's charity?"

It was Mrs. Hallam's turn to be surprised, but she resolutely controlled her voice as she answered:—

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"Certainly not, Gabrielle; I do not at all know what you mean. Tell me."

"I will," answered the girl, sinking back to her seat. "But if you had known of that all along and had consented to it, keeping me in ignorance of my own humiliating situation, I would not have told you anything. I think I should have stopped loving you—or at least I would have tried to do that."

"I am waiting to hear," answered Mrs. Hallam, again drawing the girl's head down upon her breast.

"You know," Gabrielle began, "how Mr. Marvin rescued me from starvation down there on the bayou. I've told you all about that."

"Yes, I know that story," was the answer.

"Well, that's the worst of it. If it were not for that, I would know now what I ought to do. As it is, I don't know."

"I cannot understand that, Gabrielle," answered Mrs. Hallam, in real perplexity. "I do not see how or why the fact that he came to your assistance at a time of terrible need, as

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any manly man must have done, should make difficulty for you now."

"Why, you see, I am grateful to him, or I have been during nearly a year now, for that and for all his other kindnesses to me, and that is what troubles me. I must never see him again or write to him or know anything about him, after he gets this," and with that she handed the check and her own curt note to her friend to read.

Again Mrs. Hallam was astonished and puzzled and grieved. But she expressed none of these feelings. She simply retained the check and note and waited for the girl to continue.

"You see, Lida, I must now behave in a way that will make him think me cruelly ungrateful."

"I do not understand why. You have told me nothing that suggests any such necessity."

"Oh, I forgot. I haven't told you yet, and so of course you do not understand. Let me go on. When he found out how destitute I was, he wanted me to come here and live with you. But you see it wouldn't have been accepting

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hospitality merely, for I had no clothes except those that I was wearing, and of course I could not let you provide for me in that way. Even if I had known you then and loved you as I do now, I could never have consented to that. As a matter of fact you were a complete stranger to me. When I explained the matter to him, he questioned me about things in his gentle, unobtrusive way, and I told him about our five bales of buried cotton that somebody had dug up and stolen. A little later he told me he had found our cotton on his boat. No, he didn't exactly tell me that, I remember now, though I didn't think of it at the time. He showed me the cotton and let me think it was mine. He sold it for me and gave me the money for it — four thousand dollars, Lida. I know now that the cotton was not mine at all. He marked it so as to make me think it mine, and he paid his partners for it. Oh, Lida, think of it. He gave me all that money and I accepted it, and have been spending it, and I suppose everybody in Cairo knows I'm a pauper living on his charity."

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It was now Lida Hallam's time to speak.

"Nobody in Cairo knows anything of the kind, Gabrielle. If anybody knew it, do you suppose I should not have heard about it. Tell me one thing: who told you all this?"

"John Land."

"John Land is a thief," answered Mrs. Hallam. "Will could send him to state's prison if he would. He decided this morning, after you left the breakfast table, to order him to leave Cairo to-day, and you may be very sure he will go and not return. But now let us look at the matter in another way. Suppose it is true. Suppose Hugh, finding that you would not accept help in your terrible need, did invent the device of the cotton bales. Was it not an altogether kindly thought?"

"Yes, but —"

"Wait, dear. Let me finish. You know Hugh pretty well by this time. Do you imagine or believe that he ever told anybody of what he had done, or that he would ever have let you or anybody else know of it?"

"No, but —"

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"Wait, dear. You know that Hugh is a very careful business man, who looks shrewdly after his financial interests. He is not even yet a rich man, though his business is prosperous, and I suppose he has about doubled his possessions since the time of which we speak. The sum of money represented by the cotton bales at that time meant a great deal to him. Now in view of all these things, what do you suppose prompted such a man to give you such a sum?"

"Why, simply because he pitied me, and that is what angers and distresses me so."

"That was not it, dear. His pity would have been satisfied by a very much smaller generosity. It might have led him to ask me to take you to teach the children on a salary, but that is quite all that mere pity would have prompted him to do. You may be sure of that. But he did not want you to do anything for hire. He wanted you to feel yourself independent, and he wanted others so to regard you. He was moved to feel a great tenderness toward you, an abounding pride for

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you. Has it ever occurred to you to ask yourself why he felt in that way? I am very certain there was never another woman in all the world for whom he would have done what he did in your case."

The girl raised her head and sat up flushing, but she made no answer for a time. At last she asked:—

"How could I—"

There she stopped, and her friend came to the rescue.

"I quite understand. You could not assume anything by way of explaining his conduct. You could not take anything for granted, unless he gave you leave by some hint or suggestion."

The girl remembered the letter in which "other things" were thrice mentioned, and she flushed again as she realized what interpretation she had half allowed herself to put upon the words, but she sat still, saying nothing. After a minute Lida Hallam began again:—

"Let us put all that aside for the present. You know at least that Hugh has a very

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generous feeling toward you — such as few men are capable of feeling toward any woman. You know that however he may have erred in judgment, his purpose has been to make you happy. You know that the letter you hold unopened in your hand, whatever it may contain, was written for your sake. Do you think you ought to insult him by refusing to read it? I am going away now for a while, so that you may be alone. I hope you will read the letter."

After she had gone Gabrielle sat for a time thinking the matter over with alternating resentment and tenderness in her heart. At last she opened the letter and began to read it. She had read scarcely more than the first paragraph, when she rose to her feet, her whole frame in a quiver of excitement. Her hair, loosened during the time when her head had lain upon Lida's breast, fell from its fastenings and hung down about her shoulders, while she found it necessary every second or two to brush her hand across her eyes by way of clearing them of tears. In this dishevelled condition, she opened her door, without wait-

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ing to finish the perusal of her letter, and ran down the hallway to the nursery, which in her eagerness she opened without pausing to knock.

“Oh, Lida!” she exclaimed, still sobbing and holding out the letter, — “read it, read it. I can’t tell you!”

Meanwhile the little people, seeing her tears, fell a-crying in sympathy; but seeing that her weeping was to an accompaniment of laughter, they quickly ceased, and stood gazing at her, not understanding. Presently she caught them up, one after another, and kissed them many times, saying:—

“Don’t cry, oh, don’t cry, for Auntie Gabrielle is so happy, so happy!”

Mrs. Hallam, having finished a hurried reading of the letter, caressed the girl with all the warmth of her strong and tender woman’s nature, and gently led her back to her room again.

“May I stay and rejoice with you, dear, or would you perhaps prefer to be alone with your happiness for a time? It shall be just as you wish.”

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"Oh, you are to stay with me. I must read the letter again. I've only read a part of it."

Her agitation was such that she could not hold the sheet up before her eyes without trembling so as to render the words illegible. So she spread it out upon her desk and eagerly read it through.

It was altogether a man's letter, — the letter of a man accustomed to go straight to the marrow of his meaning.

"Your brother Pierre is alive and is in New Orleans, recovering from his terrible wounds," the letter began. "He will recover entirely, the doctors say, but his left leg has been amputated above the knee — not recently, but immediately after he was picked up wounded on the battle-field at Gettysburg. The leg has completely healed, so that he will be able to wear the cork leg that I have sent North to have made for him. If the leg wound had been all, he would now be well, but he was terribly wounded through the body, and for more than a year he lay in hospital at the North. Then, having become a convalescent, he was sent here

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to complete his recovery, lest the severity of a Northern winter should bring on trouble with his lungs. When he grew strong enough, he was aided to escape from the prison hospital, and he is now comfortably cared for in the house of a friend whose name I must not mention, for obvious reasons. I have not yet seen Pierre, lest my going to him should lead to his discovery and rearrest, but I have seen the friend who is sheltering him, and I can tell you positively that he is now completely out of danger. I have that assurance from the surgeon who has been treating him.

“Now, my dear Gabrielle, I can easily imagine the joy this news of mine will give you ; but you cannot know, you never will know, what it means to me to be the bearer of such tidings to you. I shall try to make you understand what I feel when I see you and have an opportunity for unrestrained talk. I cannot say how soon that will be. My own business here is nearly finished now, but I shall stay awhile in order to see if I cannot secure Pierre’s release. I have influence enough for that, I think, or

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rather, I hope ; and if I succeed, I shall take him with me to Cairo. In the meanwhile perhaps you had better say nothing about the matter to anybody but Lida and Will."

There the letter ended, as abruptly as it had begun, for the reason that it was the letter of a business man. But there was a postscript, in which Hugh added :—

"Your property seems in good shape. The New Orleans house and grounds have been well cared for by the officers who are occupying them as headquarters. I have been to the plantation also. It is a very fine possession, and will make you and Pierre financially very comfortable if there are no confiscation laws enacted. However, I'll tell you all about the property later. This letter is simply to tell you about Pierre."

XXXII

GABRIELLE'S PERPLEXITY

THE two women remained together rejoicing. Mrs. Hallam was about to withdraw, thinking that the girl might prefer to be alone with her happiness for a time, but to that suggestion Gabrielle earnestly, almost violently, answered:—

“No, no, no! Please don't leave me, Lida. The good news is too much for me to bear alone. You must help me endure it.”

Then she turned to the letter and read it again—this time reading it aloud. As she finished she exclaimed:—

“And it was Hugh Marvin who did that for me, Lida. Was there ever so good a man in the world? Was there ever such a friend? And an hour ago,—while that letter lay there unopened,—I was angry and resentful in my feeling toward him!”

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That sentence brought back her perplexity of mind. It reminded her that even yet there was no way out of her difficulty. It was still true that she had accepted Hugh Marvin's money, and she had yet to decide what she should do about it. But somehow she found herself able to face that thought without anger now, and with far less of humiliation than before. The problem still confronted her, however, and the tumult of emotions that filled her soul rendered her for the time at least unfit to grapple with it.

"I can't think it out, Lida," she said, without explaining to what she referred. "My head is in a whirl. But one thing is certain: I'll never send that note to the man who has brought such joy to me. It would be like slapping him in the face."

As she spoke she took up the sheet on which she had that morning written her curt message to accompany the check, and thrust it into the little nest of slowly dying fire that still remained in the grate. But Mrs. Hallam observed that she did not destroy the check.

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Presently the half-hysterical girl turned almost savagely upon her friend, saying:—

“I must *do* something, Lida. Don’t you *see* I must do something? I can’t sit here any longer. I feel like running, or shouting, or breaking something. Tell me what I can do. No, don’t. I know for myself now. I’ll send for Moses to bring Hotfoot up, and I’ll go out on the levee and run her at top speed. She’s *his* mare, you know, and he would like that best. Won’t you go with me, Lida?”

“Yes, dear, I’ll ride with you. First let me telegraph for Moses to bring the mare. Then I’ll order my own saddle-horse.”

There were no telephones in that day,— forty years ago,— but Captain Will Hallam had strung telegraph wires from his house to his office and his warehouses, and to the homes of all his chief clerks. He had required all of them to learn to send and receive telegraphic messages, and for her own convenience Mrs. Hallam had made herself an expert in that rather easily acquired art. She now went to the instrument, called up her husband’s office,

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and asked that Moses be instructed to bring Hotfoot to the house.

Half an hour later the two women were galloping through the woodlands just outside the town. Gabrielle had once or twice pushed her horse into a full run for half a mile or so, but she was content now with a less violent speed, and presently the two Amazons slowed their steeds down to a footpace and began to talk together.

There was something in Gabrielle's mind which she several times tried to put into words, but without any very marked success. Still, Lida Hallam was able to divine her thought, and to encourage it.

"After all, Lida," the girl said, "it is natural for men to be good to women and to take care of them, only —"

There she suspended her sentence, because its continuance must involve an assumption that she was unwilling to admit even to herself that she had made in her own mind.

"Certainly it is," replied her friend. "That is what men were born for. It is the chief

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joy a well-constituted man has in life, and the best service a woman can render any man who loves her is to recognize and enjoy her own dependence upon his tender care of her. And women were made for that too."

Seeing that Gabrielle did not reply, Mrs. Hallam rightly interpreted her silence. Until Hugh Marvin should declare his love for her, she would not utter a syllable that should seem to assume the existence or even the possibility of that love.

"She knows it well enough," thought the elder woman. "She could not fail to read it in between the lines of Hugh's letter, even if he has given her no other suggestion of it. She shies away from admitting her interpretation of his words, and that's quite as it should be."

Then she eased the situation a trifle by saying:—

"I think I never told you of it, but when our father died — Hugh's and mine — his estate was greatly involved. We had always lived expensively, supposing our father to be rich, but when Hugh came to look into affairs, he

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found very little left of the estate. Generous fellow that he is and loving his sister as he did, he carefully concealed the fact of our impoverishment from me. I had just finished at school, and it had been arranged by my father that I should go abroad for a year in company with some friends. Hugh insisted that the plan should be carried out, and I went, never dreaming that he was putting himself in straits at home. In fact he completely impoverished himself for my sake. He settled up the estate, and invested all that was left of it — his share and mine — in an annuity for me. Then he went to work. When at last I learned what he had done, I wanted to give back his share, but that could not be, as it had been invested in an annuity. ‘You are a woman,’ he said, ‘and I am a man. There was barely enough left to provide for you, even in this small way. I exercised my privilege as a man in the matter. I knew I could take care of myself.’ Not very long afterward I married. After a little while Will began to make money rapidly, and his business grew to such proportions that he had

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to employ hundreds of men in various capacities — clerks, steamboat officers, warehousemen, and scores of others. Hugh had been supporting himself by work on a stock-farm in Kentucky, but the army operations had destroyed everything there, and he decided to try his fortunes in commercial ways. Will wanted to give him all that he had spent in buying the annuity for me, so that he might have a capital with which to set himself up in business. But Hugh positively declined to accept a single dollar, writing to me that to do so would ‘spoil all.’ Then Will wanted him to come to Cairo and accept employment in his business. But Hugh refused even that, saying: ‘I know very little about business. I shouldn’t really earn the wages Will would pay me, and I will not let him support me. I must make my own way if I can, beginning at the bottom and working for strangers who will pay me only what I really earn. If I have or can develop any aptitude for business, I shall make my own place in the world, as Will has done. If I have no capacity, then I must take the consequences.’ I am tell-

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ing you more of the story, Gabrielle, than I intended. What I meant to show you is how much it means to a man like Hugh to be permitted to care for any woman that he loves."

That last word sealed Gabrielle's lips. To make any reply she must either assume the existence of a state of feeling on Hugh Marvin's part which she would not assume, or resort to a false pretence which she would not do. Therefore she said nothing for a time. She pushed her mare into a gallop instead, and Mrs. Hallam galloped by her side, satisfied that she had fully accomplished her purpose. When at last they drew rein, Gabrielle asked :—

"Then you think a woman should have no proper pride, or that if she has it, she should crucify it?"

"Not at all," answered the other. "A woman without proper pride is despicable. It is only improper pride that she should not have. Women cannot help being dependent upon men in a thousand ways. Nature intended that they should be. They are far weaker in physique for one thing, far more helpless in

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self-defence. They must be housed and shielded in many ways. They must be escorted in many places where men may freely go. It is not physical defence alone that they need. Their reputation must be protected, and even their minds must be guarded against the shock of the knowledge of evil. As for support, man is the natural bread-winner, not only because he is the stronger, but still more because he is free to go out into the world, while the wife and mother has imperative duties at home. It is no shame to women that they accept support and protection from their mankind. It is their right, and it is the duty of men to provide for them. Every good man esteems it his privilege as well."

"What a lovely spring day it is, Lida!"

That was Gabrielle's inconsequent reply, as the two drew rein at the Hallam house, and greeted the children who had tumultuously scampered down the walk to meet them.

XXXIII

AFTER THE STORM

THE time had now come when Gabrielle was in the mood to be alone with her joy. Tarrying only for the luncheon which was waiting and for which her ride had given her an appetite, she went to her room and took up her problem with a mind somewhat cleared by the exercise, and perhaps also by the suggestions her friend had put into it.

"Lida is right, in a general way," she reflected. "We women must be dependent upon men in many ways, and it is right that we should be. In fact I doubt that any woman would be happy if it were otherwise. It is our nature, I suppose, to lean upon strength that is greater than our own, and we are happy in feeling that those we lean upon do not feel our weight to be a burden. But it must be a loving

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strength if we are to lean upon it without a humiliating sense of our dependence. And of course — well, of course that makes a difference that Lida doesn't take sufficiently into account. She had a right to accept her brother's generosity, because she knew he — well, because she was his sister. It makes a great difference."

For some reason this thought prompted the girl to read Hugh Marvin's letter again. Perhaps she wanted to satisfy herself as to the correct interpretation of a part of it. Whether she succeeded in that or not, the reading gave a new significance to the postscript, relating to her property. In her joy over the news regarding her brother, she had given no thought at all to what Hugh had written of more material things. She cared nothing for property interests at such a time, and perhaps there were other reasons for this indifference to the postscript. We know at any rate that her mind had been much occupied with thoughts of Hugh Marvin, and what he had so generously done for her, and what her own attitude toward him should now be.

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But now that she had read the letter again and with a less perturbed mind, the news contained in the postscript assumed a new importance in her eyes.

“If Pierre and I are to get all that property back,” she said to herself, “I shall be able to pay Hugh” — for somehow she called him that in her mind now — “all the money I accepted from him, with interest or discount, or whatever they call it in such cases. Then I shall owe him nothing, and I can meet him without being ashamed.”

This was a glad and a gladdening thought to the girl still oppressed as she was with her sense of obligation. And so changed was her attitude, that while she rejoiced thus in the prospect of being able to discharge her debt, the reflection was accompanied by none of her former resentment over the way in which she had been deceived into a false position. Hugh's conduct in the case seemed somehow far less heinous in her view than it had seemed before. Unconsciously to herself, she had begun to recognize some sort of right on his part to do

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what he had done for her. If she could not yet quite approve the methods he had employed, she was ready at least to excuse what he had done in view of the motives that had inspired his conduct, or, as she formulated the thought in her own mind: "At least he has not deserved that I should affront him and wound his feelings. He has been very, very generous. I must recognize that in common fairness. The money isn't all I owe him. If I am ever to discharge my debt to him, I must repay his unselfish kindness with recognition besides handing back his money. The money is really the smallest part of the debt. I wonder I didn't think of that when I wrote that insulting note. I'm glad I had a chance to burn it."

The girl's own soul was pleading Hugh Marvin's suit in that hour in a more effective way than any that he could have brought to bear, had he been there to plead it in person.

As she sat there thinking, she felt a great weariness stealing over her, and small wonder. For nearly twenty-four sleepless hours now she had been under a fierce strain of conflicting

AFTER THE STORM

emotions, and she was well-nigh exhausted by the experience. Her eyes were hollow and dark-ringed, as they had been when Hugh had found her down there on the bayou, but the countenance was illumined now, as it had not been then, by a joy that served as a substitute for peace of mind.

Once she closed her weary eyes for a space, and fell half asleep in her chair. Quickly rousing herself, she resolutely shook off the somnolence, and after changing her gown, descended the stairs in search of the children.

“Poor dears,” she said to them in French, when she found them wandering listlessly about the house-grounds. “Poor dears, you haven’t had a romp to-day. Come now, I’ll be the hare and you shall play hounds ; see if you can catch me !”

For half an hour there was a mad frolic all over the place, as one little game of romps succeeded another, and when the little people grew tired, their companion sat down and told them wonderful fairy stories for the rest of the afternoon.

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Lida Hallam observed it all.

“At any rate she will not grow morbid or melancholy,” said that sagacious young matron to herself.

XXXIV

A GALE ON THE GULF

WHEN John Land ran away from Cairo, he calculated that he could catch the steamer which was appointed to sail from New York on Saturday morning, "if he had good luck."

He did not have good luck. All went well with him till his train reached Allentown in Pennsylvania, and as the run thence to New York was one of only a few hours, he congratulated himself upon a practical certainty of reaching the city two hours before sailing time. But presently his train stopped in the midst of the open country, and inquiry soon revealed the fact that a freight train was wrecked just ahead. There was a delay of two hours, during which John Land's impatience became distressing in the extreme. All his old

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fears returned. Rukensdorff, he reflected, must be arriving in Washington about that time. He would go to Willard's at once according to appointment. He would there learn that Land had given him the slip, and he would at once divine his purpose. And Land must miss his ship and remain in New York for a full week before the next sailing day would come around. There would be ample time for Rukensdorff and his associates to find him and "put the screws on him," as he phrased it in his mind.

He was half determined to go to Canada, but he knew that there was an extradition treaty in force between the United States and England under which he believed he could be arrested and brought back. As there was no Atlantic cable in operation in the spring of 1865, he would be safe if once he should be able to sail out of New York for Liverpool. He would have a full week after landing in England in which to consult lawyers as to extradition treaties, and to go unmolested to some country where no power of the United States could

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reach him. But for that freight wreck he would have placed himself beyond the jurisdiction before noon on that day. As it was, his purpose, so nearly achieved, was utterly baffled by the accident.

When at last he reached New York, he went to a quiet hotel, and set to work at once to discover what means of escape there might be yet available. But when night came, he found it impossible to sleep even in his obscure hotel. His fearful forebodings came back. He knew how perfectly organized the government secret service had become during the war, and how omnipresent its agents were. It was altogether probable, he thought, that, upon learning of the trick he had played, Rukensdorff and his associates would wreak vengeance by laying the facts before the authorities and thus setting the government upon his track. Consciously guilty, and nerveless coward that he was, he passed two nights in sleepless agony. On Monday morning he hurried to the shipping district, depositing his bond bag in a bank vault for temporary safe-

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keeping. He learned presently that a certain English steamer was in the harbor, loading for Mexico, and that she would sail three days later.

She was a small, underpowered trading ship, — what we should now call a tramp steamer, — very old, very dirty, and promising to be extremely uncomfortable at sea. But in his well-nigh insane eagerness to get away, John Land put aside all other considerations. The wandering ship belonged to no line, and had no agents of any kind in the city. Her captain was accustomed to get cargoes wherever he could and to take them to whatever port the shippers desired. So to the captain on board John Land went. He was careful to give no name, and he did not definitely engage passage. To do that, he thought, might give a clew in the event that the secret-service people should be looking for him before the ship sailed. He represented himself as a business man with large interests in Mexico, which required his presence in that country at the earliest possible moment, and he arranged with the

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captain for passage if he could settle up his New York business by the time of sailing. Under pretence of saving the last minute, he arranged to board the ship from a tug in the lower bay as she should pass out, the captain agreeing to stop his engine should he see Land's tug approaching.

There remained the three days of waiting to provide for, and Land knew that he could not sleep in the city. After looking about him, he hired a harbor tug, again giving no name, but explaining that he was tired from overstrain in business affairs, and wished to go off upon the water for a few days' rest. As he made no protest against the extortionate price charged for the tug, and as he paid for four days in advance, — to make sure, — the tug owners did not bother to ask any questions. Having sent a mattress, some bedclothes, and an abundant supply of cooked provisions on board, he secured his precious baggage and embarked. For three days he made the tug captain steam about the lower bay, anchoring at night in the horseshoe at Sandy Hook. On the third day

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he kept the tug always near the ship channel, and about four o'clock in the afternoon he was gladdened by the sight of the steamer slowly coming toward the southwest spit. There he boarded her and waved adieu to the wondering tug captain.

That officer looked scrutinizingly at the steamer as she crawled away toward the open sea, and then said to his mate :—

“That feller must 'a' been uncommon anxious to travel in furrin parts. I don't envy him his voyage in that rickety old tub, particular if she happens to meet up with a gale in the Gulf Stream.”

“Nor me, nuther,” answered the other. “He's left his bed an' beddin' on the tug, but I'll bet a week's wages he ain't left no furrin address behind.”

The voyage was indeed one of utter wretchedness, so far as conditions were concerned. The ship had no passenger accommodations whatever. John Land was assigned to a bunk in the captain's little cabin, the distinguishing characteristic of which was antique dirt. The

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food was such as sailors on freight ships eat, and it was prepared by the traditional incompetence of a "sea cook." The ship reeked with foul odors, of which the smell of bilge-water and rancid machine oil were by no means the worst. As if additionally to distress the passenger, who had never been at sea before, the ship ran into the roughest kind of March weather on the first day out, and day after day she labored heavily in a raging sea.

Nevertheless John Land was measurably happy. In spite of discomfort, in spite of seasickness, in spite even of his discovery that the ship was dangerously unfit for sea, — a fact which the captain was at no trouble to conceal, — he had moments of rejoicing in the knowledge that he was at last beyond the boundaries of the United States, and out of reach of any agent the government might set to arrest him. These moments became hours of rejoicing as the ship steamed down along the eastern coast of Florida, for there the wind fell and the sea forgot its fury. But soon after entering the Gulf of Mexico and laying the course for

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Vera Cruz, the already strained and leaking ship encountered a tropical hurricane from the southwest.

The tempest blew with such fury that everything movable upon the deck was blown away like so much litter of rags or paper or feathers. Even the great iron ventilator pipes were twisted off at the deck and sent flying in the air like kites that have snapped their strings. The officers on the bridge were lashed by ropes to the stanchions, while the sailors clung for dear life to such holds as they could get upon guy chains and the like. Some of them, for lack of other holds, threw themselves prostrate on the decks, seizing ring-bolts or anchor bars or whatever else they could clutch in a desperate struggle to save themselves.

The masts had gone overboard at the first onset of the storm, and were now dragging alongside by their guys in a way very perilous to the ship. Meanwhile the feeble pulsations of the engine failed even to give steerageway to the vessel, and presently, as a receding wave left the screw exposed above water and re-

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leased from resistance, the engine whirled it violently, and the shaft snapped in two.

The hurricane, properly so called, lasted for scarcely more than half an hour, but it was succeeded by a steadier and still tremendous whole gale. The ship was a helpless hulk tossed about like a plaything of the storm. The steam-pumps were set going, and for a time they seemed to be gaining somewhat upon the water in the hold, but at last the engineer sent word to the captain that his boiler, in which he had been boiling salt water, had burned out so badly that he must instantly rake out his fires by way of avoiding an explosion.

Fortunately the gale was slowly abating its fury as the sun went down, and the captain ordered all hands, including his stalwart passenger, to go to the hand-pumps and labor for their lives. All night long they toiled, yet the water slowly gained upon them. The captain's only hope was that he might keep the ship's deck above water until morning, on the chance that some passing ship might take off the imperilled company.

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In this he succeeded, and as the wind had continued to fall during the night, the morning found the battered and water-logged hulk of the steamer slowly settling into a quiet sea.

Every boat had been carried away, and there was nothing left on board out of which to construct a raft. The masts that had been dragged in the water alongside had been cut away as soon as that was possible, lest they should punch holes in the sides of the ship. They had completely disappeared during the night.

There was nothing to be done except continue the pumping by hand, while lightening the ship by throwing cargo overboard. John Land pumped himself into a condition of utter exhaustion. Strong man that he was, his muscles were not hardened by exercise, but his panic fear of death prompted him to continue the work until he fell helpless upon the deck. He had all the time kept his bond satchel within reach, and he now used it as a pillow.

About noon a steamer came up from under the horizon, and attracted by the distress signals, she bore down upon the derelict. She

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reached the wreck barely in time to take off the ship's company, before the hulk, with a heavy lurch, went down, stern foremost.

The rescuing ship was a Spaniard from Cuba, bound for New Orleans, and about midnight she entered the Mississippi.

XXXV

IN NEGOTIATION

IT was in March, 1865, that Hugh Marvin sent his letter to Gabrielle, telling her of his discovery concerning her brother, and promising to make an effort for the young man's release.

There was one military officer of high rank in New Orleans who happened to be a near personal friend of Hugh Marvin. To him Hugh — withholding names of course — related in outline the story of Pierre, and explained his own desire to secure the young man's liberty on parole.

"He has lost a leg," he said, "and apart from that his other wounds have rendered further military service on his part utterly impossible. And there is the further consideration that the war is obviously nearing its

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end. Grant's stupendous combination will culminate in Lee's destruction or surrender as soon as the Virginia mud begins to harden in the spring sunshine."

This prophecy was a very easy and safe one to make at that time. Sherman had made his march to the sea, and after reorganizing his army at Savannah, had begun the further work that Grant had marked out for him to do. He had started north with irresistible energy. He had compelled the Confederates to abandon Charleston. He had captured Columbia, and a coöperating force had reduced Fort Fisher, making a prize of Wilmington. The whole Atlantic seaboard was conquered, and Sherman was steadily pressing forward through North Carolina, to strike Lee in the rear.

In the meanwhile Grant had ceaselessly extended his Petersburg lines southward and westward, threatening Lee with envelopment, and compelling him, with his meagre remnant of an army, to stretch out his defensive lines to hopeless attenuation.

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The Federal commander was waiting only for the March winds to dry up the roads before he should deliver his final and decisive blow. He had only to hurl a force against the Confederate line at any point he might select, with an absolute certainty of breaking it and compelling Lee to abandon Richmond and Petersburg and go into hopeless retreat. So much was evident to ordinary intelligence without any aid from military knowledge.

Hugh's military friend, therefore, had no hesitation in promising to aid in securing Pierre's release, by using all the influence he possessed with the higher military authorities, and he loyally kept his promise.

But from the first there was one serious obstacle in the way. Hugh admitted that the young man in whom he was interested had escaped from the prison hospital, and was now in hiding. These were difficult facts to deal with, and with every persuasion he could bring to bear, Hugh could not induce the military authorities to overlook them.

"If the young man had not escaped," the

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Adjutant-general explained, "I would gladly do something for him. Indeed, I may say, frankly, that if he were still a prisoner, I would do all that you ask, and he should go free on parole. As it is, a due regard for military authority and dignity forbids."

Hugh did not yet despair. He visited the Adjutant-general frequently, and soon the two were on terms of personal friendship. One afternoon Hugh received a note from headquarters in which the Adjutant-general wrote:—

"I wish you would invite me to a tête-à-tête supper in your hotel rooms to-night."

That was all, but it was enough. The invitation was sent at once, and at the appointed hour the two sat down together at table. There was a waiter present, of course, and while the meal lasted, no reference was made to the object of the officer's presence. When the table was finally cleared and the servant had gone for good, the Adjutant-general asked:—

"Have you access to your young friend, whoever he is?"

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"I have never seen him," Hugh answered. "But I can communicate with him whenever I wish. If it were very necessary, I suppose I could arrange to see him."

"I don't know that that will be necessary," said the other, reflectively. "Is he disposed to take advice from you? Would he do what you urged him to do, if you urged it very strongly?"

"Yes, I think he would. Indeed, I am positive of that."

"Very well. Suppose you advise him to surrender himself to the authorities at the convalescent hospital to-night, without fail. And, of course, you will tell nobody, not even the young man, that I have spoken to you on the subject."

"Of course I shall say nothing on that head," answered Hugh. "You are sure I shall take no risk of going wrong if I give him this advice?"

"Absolutely. And now good evening. I have an appointment."

Hugh sent at once for Pierre's friend, and,

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of course without telling him his reasons, urged him to induce Pierre to surrender himself as advised.

"Are you willing to take the responsibility of urging that?" asked the friend. "Have you thought of what it will mean to Pierre to be imprisoned again? You remember that in answer to all your persuasions and in spite of all the influence you have brought to bear the military authorities have peremptorily refused to parole him?"

"Yes, to all your questions," Hugh replied. "I take the responsibility of strongly urging Pierre Latour to act at once upon the advice I have given him through you."

"Will he be paroled?"

"I can tell you no more than I have already told you. I advise and urge him to surrender himself to the hospital authorities to-night."

"Very well," answered the other. "I will convey your message and see that he acts upon it. I sincerely hope you are making no mistake."

"I am making no mistake," answered Hugh, confidently.

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After Pierre's friend had left, Hugh Marvin drew from his pocket a little unsigned slip of paper and read it again. The Adjutant-general had laid it on a lamp-stand just as he was leaving, and as he had done so with manifest intent to leave it there, Hugh had read it before sending for Pierre's friend. It was in pencil, and appeared to be either a partial first draught or a hastily scribbled and incomplete copy of a special order from the office of the commanding general. It read : —

“In view of the overcrowded condition of the hospitals, and particularly the hospital in which wounded prisoners of war are confined, the commanding general directs that paroles—”

There the writing stopped abruptly, but Hugh had no difficulty in guessing what was to follow the words written. After reading it now for the second time, he dropped the paper into the empty grate and touched a match to it.

It was about this time that John Land was brought to New Orleans with the rest of the shipwrecked company.

XXXVI

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR

WHEN John Land was put ashore in New Orleans from the rescuing steamer, he felt himself comparatively safe, for a time at least. He argued that even if the secret-service men should be set upon his track, they would either find out nothing about him or would learn that he had sailed away on a steamer bound for Mexico. In the latter case, they would, of course, pursue their search no further, inasmuch as our government had no diplomatic relations of any kind with the so-called Empire which the French and Austrians were at that time attempting to set up in Mexico, and no extradition treaty with the fugitive republican government of Juarez.

But while he felt himself temporarily safe in New Orleans, Land was minded to reach

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Mexico in fact at the earliest possible date. He had another reason for this besides his desire to place himself beyond the reach of American authority. In the disturbed state of Mexico at that time, and in the lawlessly speculative spirit that animated the intruding government, John Land foresaw abundant opportunity in that country for the exercise of his peculiar gift of getting possession of other people's money in large sums. Now that he had capital in abundance with which to work, he indulged in dreams of such opulence as might satisfy Avarice itself.

But his inquiries revealed the fact that there was, at that time, no commerce between the United States and Mexico, and no ships regularly sailing from New Orleans for Vera Cruz. Now and then an English or a Spanish trading ship touched at New Orleans on its way to the Mexican port, and one such was expected to do so within ten days or a fortnight.

There was nothing for Land to do, therefore, but wait with what patience he could, and to live, meanwhile, in the obscurest way possible.

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After a day or two spent at the St. Charles Hotel, he sought out a lodging down by the French market, and took his meals in obscure French restaurants, not frequented by Americans.

But quietly as he might live in New Orleans, and seek as he might for obscurity there, Publicity elsewhere was making itself a factor in his problem of safety-seeking.

When Rukensdorff and Avalon discovered how he had given them the slip, they rightly guessed that he had gone to New York to take ship. They followed quickly, and after inquiry they were satisfied that he could not have sailed as yet, inasmuch as the train on which he had travelled had arrived too late for the steamer. They were convinced that he was still in the city, and upon a manufactured pretence, they instituted a search for him. If he could be found, there was still a chance of extorting the money they desired. They were not yet ready, therefore, to reveal the facts to the authorities at Washington, and thus to set the secret-service men upon the fugitive's tracks.

But their own inquiries utterly failed to find

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trace of him in New York. They learned definitely that he had reached the city. One of their searchers found the hotel in which he had dwelt during Saturday and Sunday. But there all trace of him disappeared. If the earth had opened and swallowed him, his vanishing could not have been more complete.

The two continued the search, however, for a day or two longer. Then giving it up they went back to the capital baffled, angry, and determined upon revenge. They were sure that Land could not have left the country, and that if the facts were laid before the executive authorities, the government would know how to find the fugitive.

They had two new partners now in the persons of the two inspecting officers who had winked at John Land's practices for a price. These men, too, had become alarmed by the threat of a congressional inquiry, and in a desperate effort to save themselves they had sought out Avalon and agreed with him to become witnesses against Land, upon his assurance of protection for themselves.

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It was certain, Avalon and Rukensdorff thought, that their victim had not yet escaped from the country, but it was equally certain that he would do so at the first opportunity. There was, therefore, no time to lose. On their arrival in Washington, Avalon went at once to the executive officers and told the story of Land's peculations and of his flight in fear of the congressional investigation threatened by Avalon's resolution. He explained that in view of the culprit's evident purpose to escape from the country it would not do to wait for a slow congressional inquiry before making an arrest. He also explained that since offering his resolution of inquiry, he had found two witnesses whose testimony would be ample and conclusive.

Immediately secret-service agents were set at work to find the fugitive. They began their work in New York, but were completely baffled there. That Land was not in the city, they were sure. That he had not escaped by sea, they were equally confident. No shipping office furnished the record of any outgoing

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passenger whose identity was not capable of full establishment, and even the records of persons passing into Canada—records that were at that time very carefully kept—offered no clew.

But one morning there appeared in the *New York Herald's* marine news columns, an obscure little despatch from New Orleans, saying :—

“The Spanish steamer *El Cid* arrived Wednesday, from Havana, bringing the crew of the British steamer *Devon*, wrecked in the Gulf. There was one passenger among the company, John Land, of Cairo, Illinois.”

Instantly the secret-service people sent telegrams to other secret-service men in Cairo and New Orleans, and in all the river towns between, asking for Land's arrest.

Of course the search was kept profoundly secret. In New Orleans the fact that John Land was “wanted” was known only to the secret-service agents and to the higher military authorities, and for a time the search was unsuccessful. The searchers discovered at the

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beginning that Hugh Marvin, who was living at the St. Charles and going about freely, was a resident of Cairo, and so they placed him under "observation," in ways that did not attract his attention. They had begun by satisfying themselves of his character and standing, but they thought it likely that as he and John Land lived in the same rather small town, they would be acquainted with each other, and that as both were in New Orleans they would seek each other out for company's sake.

One morning Hugh Marvin went down early to the French market for one of the famous breakfasts that were served there, and that every American visitor to the city was expected to indulge in occasionally. Coffee and pancakes were specialties of these breakfasts, and they were served, not in restaurants or at table, but at the market stands, before which the visitors sat on low stools, and saw their breakfasts prepared on the other side of the narrow bench-like stand.

As Marvin seated himself, a pleasant-looking stranger, whose face he remembered having

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seen at various places in New Orleans, took the stool next to him, and entered into a conversation of that easy, casual kind which is common where two gentlemen meet in a public place for a common purpose. They spoke of the special excellence of French market coffee, and of the strangely foreign character of French market customs, and of other such things. The breakfast stands were pretty well filled at the time, but there was one vacant stool next to Hugh Marvin's, and presently some one approached it as if to occupy it. Marvin moved his own stool a trifle to make room for the newcomer, but as he did so the man seemed to change his mind, turning to go away in search of a stool elsewhere. Hugh looked up, thinking that he had possibly failed in courtesy. To his astonishment he recognized the retreating form, and instantly ejaculated:—

“By Jove, it's John Land!”

“Some acquaintance of yours?” asked the man at his elbow.

“Yes, and no. I know him,” answered Marvin; “but the last time we met I felt it

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necessary to throw all the inkstands in my office at his head. That's why he didn't take the stool."

As he finished speaking, the other quitted his half-eaten breakfast, tossed at least twice its cost to the attendant, and hurried away in a fashion that aroused Hugh Marvin's curiosity. Looking, he saw his companion of a minute before pass rapidly down the line of breakfast stands to the one at which Land had found a seat. Meanwhile two soldiers, carrying their guns with bayonets fixed, came out of the crowd, as if in response to some signal, and joined him. He placed his hand on Land's shoulder, and said simply:—

"Come with me."

Then bidding the two soldiers take charge of the prisoner, the secret-service officer led the way to the stand at which Hugh Marvin sat, and, using his name as freely as an acquaintance might have done, he offered his card, saying:—

"When you finish your breakfast, Mr. Marvin, I shall have to ask you to go with me to

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headquarters to identify this man. Or, if you'd prefer to go by yourself, you can join me at headquarters within half an hour. Your promise to come will be sufficient, and as a crowd has gathered, it will doubtless be pleasanter for you to go alone."

"Am I required to do this?" asked Hugh, adding, "because otherwise I'd rather not appear in the matter at all. The man and I have quarrelled. I don't like even to seem vindictive."

"You have no choice, Mr. Marvin, and certainly you are in no way responsible for this arrest. You are wanted merely as a witness to the man's identity."

Hugh promised to follow in a fly, and did so. An hour later John Land was taken to a military prison and his baggage, including his satchel of plunder, was seized.

At the prison he was carefully searched for weapons and papers, after which he was ushered into a cell. There he alternately paced the narrow floor and sat moodily on the side of the bench that was to serve as his only bed.

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On the morrow, as he had been informed, he would be taken on board a steamboat for a journey North, where he would be put upon his trial. He knew what the result of the trial must be.

After nightfall the solid iron door outside the grating of his cell was closed, and the view of the sentry in the corridor was cut off. Then John Land removed his trousers, and, with his teeth, made a hole in the hem at the bottom of one leg. Through it he removed a little bag made of thin rubber cloth, from which he took three little pellets, scarcely larger than pinheads, and swallowed them. Ten seconds later every muscle in his body became as rigid as steel, and he fell back upon the bench, — stark, stiff, dead.

XXXVII

A SOLDIER'S HONOR

TWO days after Pierre Latour's surrender of himself at the convalescent hospital prison, the order was issued of which Hugh Marvin had got a hint from the scrap of paper left in his room by the Adjutant-general.

In execution of General Grant's comprehensive plan for crushing what was left of Confederate strength, the troops in New Orleans were ordered to move against Mobile, coöperating with other forces that were to assail that city by way of preventing the Confederates from sending reënforcements from Mobile either to Lee in Virginia or Johnston in the Carolinas. It was Grant's plan and purpose so to employ all the Union forces not directly with him or Sherman as to occupy all the Confederates at

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every point from which otherwise Lee might draw assistance.

The commander at New Orleans anticipated the coming of large numbers of wounded men to that city in the course of these final operations of the war, and by way of making room for them in the hospitals he ordered that every Union soldier sufficiently convalescent to be removed should be sent North on hospital steamers, and that such of the convalescent Confederate prisoners as had friends to care for them should be paroled. As Pierre had surrendered himself two days before the order was issued, thus becoming again a wounded Confederate prisoner, he was included in the list of those released on parole.

His first act upon being released was to visit Hugh Marvin in his hotel room, and there, for the first time, Hugh met the young man in person.

In spite of his long confinement in hospital, and notwithstanding the severity of the wounds he had suffered, Pierre still had much of the bronze in his face which he had acquired by

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long exposure as a soldier in a fighting regiment. But underneath the bronze and the ruggedness of the weather-beaten face, Hugh quickly discovered what he regarded as a strong resemblance between the young man and his sister. The contour of the face was the same, if allowance were made for the difference of age and sex. There was the same combination of resolution and mobility in the lines around the mouth. Above all, the eyes were like hers, as Hugh remembered them at the time of his first meeting with her on the bank of the bayou. Hugh looked long at him after the first greetings were over, and he found it easy to imagine this young man handing the creese to his sister with injunctions to use it if necessity should come. For there was a strength in Pierre Latour's delicately moulded, but strongly lined face, which might hesitate at nothing in pursuit of any rightful purpose.

The two became friends almost in the instant of their meeting. Hugh was strongly drawn toward Pierre by his resemblance to Gabrielle, and by his own personality as revealed in his

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face and voice and manner. Pierre was filled with affectionate gratitude toward Hugh, not only or chiefly because of his activity in seeking his own release, but still more because of his rescue of Gabrielle, and because of the tender care he had given to her in her time of need.

“I want to come to you again, if I may,” said the young man, eagerly, “and ask you to tell me all you can about my sister, — my Gabrielle. It was you who saved her, you who brought her back to life again after I had given her up as dead. I want to hear the whole story, every detail of it. May I not come to you soon to hear it all?”

There was a note of pleading in the voice, that touched Hugh very tenderly. He answered at once : —

“You shall stay here with me while I remain in New Orleans, — it will be for a very few days now, as I am to go up the river on the first steamboat that leaves. I have a spare bedroom in there, and I want to talk with you. I’m going out presently to be gone for an hour or two. You are weak still, and weary from the

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excitement of release. You must try to sleep while I am gone. If you wake before I return, you are to ring for a servant and order whatever you want to eat. Get all the rest and sleep you can, as we two will probably talk rather late to-night, at least as lateness is reckoned in the case of a convalescent. I'll send word to your friend that I'm going to keep you as long as I remain here."

He bade the youth adieu and went his way. He did not tell him the purpose of his going, lest the knowledge of it should prevent his sleeping. But it was in Pierre's behalf that he went at once to military headquarters. There he found everything in confusion, preparatory to that taking of the field which had been ordered. But the Adjutant-general and Hugh Marvin had become rather intimate friends by this time, and, busy as he was, the officer ordered the young man admitted.

With that promptitude and directness which Hugh was accustomed to practise in all business affairs, he came to the point at once.

"Now that my young friend, Pierre Latour,

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has been released upon parole," he said, "I want to take him with me to Cairo, where his sister is. I have come to ask for a passport for him."

The officer shook his head.

"I'm afraid that cannot be arranged," he answered. "The paroles to wounded Confederates, you know, expressly limit their movements. They were issued upon the distinct promise of those to whom they were given, to remain within certain bounds set forth in each case until exchanged or otherwise released. In young Latour's case, the requirement is that he shall remain within the city of New Orleans. You will readily see the necessity for this. So long as these men are within our lines we must keep them under a species of surveillance."

"But he is so manifestly unfit for any possible military service," answered Hugh, "and I am ready to make myself personally responsible for him. It would only be a change of the locality to which he is limited—the substitution of Cairo for New Orleans."

"It cannot be," the officer said firmly. Then

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as if suddenly thinking of a way out, he added :—

“I’ll tell you what to do, Marvin. Get the young man to take the oath of allegiance. Then he will be free to go anywhere he pleases. He can’t do any more service in any case, and this war is so manifestly on its last legs there is no reason why he shouldn’t recognize the fact and accept the result.”

“I’ll suggest that course to him, and as you obviously need every moment of your time just now, I’ll bid you good morning, with my sincerest thanks for all your kindness.”

“It must be ‘good-by’ as well as ‘good morning,’ ” said the Adjutant-general. “We shall be away from here within a few hours, and I’m not likely to see you again.”

“I hope for better luck than that,” said Hugh. “A few weeks will end this thing, and I suppose you will return to civil life. In that case — we’ll try to meet again.”

With that Hugh bowed himself out, and returned to the hotel full of hope that Pierre would accept the suggestion made and act upon

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it. He was prepared to encounter some reluctance on Pierre's part, knowing as he did how resolutely every Confederate soldier clung to his Southern allegiance. But the objection, Hugh thought, would be purely sentimental, and he felt assured of his success in overcoming it. He could see no reason, as circumstances then existed, for a persistent refusal on Pierre's part to accept complete liberty and restoration to citizenship on terms so easy and which seemed to him so entirely reasonable also.

On his arrival at the hotel he found his guest greatly refreshed by sleep and by a bath, and as it was now four o'clock, the usual dinner hour in New Orleans at that time, he immediately ordered dinner served in his rooms.

When the meal was quite at an end, he introduced the subject that was uppermost in his mind. He did so gently and guardedly.

"I've been busying myself in your behalf, Latour," he said by way of beginning.

"It seems to me your friendship is always doing that," said Pierre. "I wonder if I shall ever have a chance to show you how deeply

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grateful I feel. But what have you been doing this time?"

"I have been trying — rather unsuccessfully I fear — to secure permission to make you my prisoner and take you with me to Cairo to join your sister."

He waited for Pierre's reply, but it did not come in words, for a time. The young Confederate looked wistfully into his host's face with eyes that revealed more of gratitude than any words could have done. Then he rose, balancing himself upon his one foot by resting upon the table, and grasped Hugh Marvin's hand. After a time he choked out the words, "Thank you from my heart, whether you succeeded or not!"

Hugh saw clearly that no such thought as this had before arisen in Pierre's mind, that he had not even dreamed of the possibility of his going now to rejoin the sister whom he had not seen for years. He saw, too, that the suggestion had awakened a great longing in Pierre's soul to do this thing. That was what Hugh had intended. He reckoned upon it as a help

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in persuading Pierre to accept the suggestion he was presently to make. By way of strengthening it he added : —

“Yes, I’ve been planning that ever since I learned that you were likely to be paroled. And as there is a steamboat at the levee which will leave for Cairo and St. Louis to-morrow evening, I have been hoping we might get away on her. But —”

“The passport was refused?” asked Pierre, interrupting. “I can readily understand that.”

“It is not absolutely refused,” Hugh replied, choosing his words carefully. “At least in refusing it the Adjutant-general was good enough to point out a way in which the main purpose may be accomplished, perhaps.”

“Tell me !”

“Well, he points out that the war is almost over, and that there can no longer be any possible doubt as to what the end will be. Lee’s army is exhausted and reduced so greatly in numbers that it must be crushed the moment Grant assails it, which he will do as soon as the roads grow a little harder. It is not only

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that. Sherman's operations have completely overrun the country south of Virginia, so that Lee no longer has a single source of supply to draw upon, or a communication that is not hopelessly cut — ”

“Wait!” said Pierre. “I see clearly what the Adjutant-general's proposal is, and I don't want that suggestion to come to me from you, my friend, or through you.” The young man hobbled about the room for a time in painfully manifest perturbation of spirit. After a while he came back to his place, took Hugh's hand warmly in his own, and said : —

“Let me explain. The proposal made by the Adjutant-general is in the highest degree insulting to me as a man. It is a proposal of dishonor, treachery, cowardice, — desertion itself. He knows all that, though you do not. You have never been a soldier, and you have had no occasion to think of such things. You have not understood the soldier's point of view, but you will when I explain, and you will sympathize with it. I quite understand that the war is nearing its end. A few weeks more will

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finish it by completely destroying the power of the South to fight. But what difference does that make in my duty? I am still a Confederate soldier, and I must remain such until the government I have sworn to serve shall be itself destroyed. Nothing less than that can absolve me from my soldierly obligations. For me to take the oath of allegiance now, would be for me to desert to the enemy. It would disgrace me forever in the eyes of all honorable men, and especially in my own eyes. Even after the end shall have come, I could never hope for restoration to the ranks of honorable men. Soldiers of the North, equally with soldiers of the South, would hold me in contempt and abhorrence, as one who, having taken service with one side, deserted to the other for his own advantage. And that is not all. When this war ends, it will be for the United States government to determine what it will do with us who have fought against it. It may decree punishment for us, confiscation, disfranchisement, even banishment. If I should take the oath now, I should escape my share in all that.

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I should be restored to citizenship, and thus cheat the United States government of its privilege of subjecting me to my share of whatever pains and penalties it may see fit to impose. No, no, no! I could no more think of taking that oath until the war is completely ended and the Confederate government utterly overthrown and destroyed than I could have consented to desert to the enemy at Chancellorsville or Gettysburg. Do you not understand?"

"I understand," answered Hugh; "and now that I do understand, I am in full sympathy with your view. I had not thought of the matter in that way. You must forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive. You were altogether right from your point of view, and of course you had never had occasion to think of the matter as it presents itself to my mind. Now let us talk of other things. You must sail by the steamboat that is to leave to-morrow evening. You have generously sacrificed much of your time to my interests and Gabrielle's. I am fairly steady in my nerves now, and I find I can write if I try hard for self-control.

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I experimented a little before you came in. I shall write a letter to Gabrielle which I'll ask you to carry. I think, if I may, I'll lie down now and rest. I am very tired and very happy. I owe all the happiness to you, and I want to tell Gabrielle of that."

XXXVIII

THE WAY OF A MAN WITH A MAID

IT was eight o'clock in the evening of the 4th of April, 1865, when the steamboat, on which Hugh Marvin was a passenger, landed at Cairo. She had left New Orleans four days before, and had made no stops, except here and there in the woods to take fresh supplies of fuel on board, so that Hugh had heard nothing of the tremendous news which greeted him as he stepped from the steamer to the deck of his own wharf-boat.

He was not expected, of course, as there was no telegraphic communication between New Orleans and Cairo, and therefore the boat's coming had not been heralded; but when he landed he was greeted by two of his shipping clerks whose duty it was to attend the incoming of every steamboat for purposes of business.

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They gave him the news in crisp, short sentences.

"Grant has broken through the rebel lines at Petersburg. Richmond has fallen. Lee is in full retreat with Grant pursuing. Surrender is expected at any hour now."

What impression the news made upon Marvin the clerks could not guess. His manner was quite impassive. His only reply was in the shape of a question concerning a quite unrelated matter.

"What freight have we ready for shipment south?"

The clerk rattled off a list of the pork, hay, grain, etc., that lay in the warehouse or in cars upon the railroad track.

"Very well, ship it all by this boat. I've arranged with the captain to turn her back from here. She has next to nothing in the way of freight for St. Louis. Let her unload it on the wharf-boat, and tell Mr. Bofinger that we are to send it on without charge for forwarding."

Having thus given his orders, Hugh Marvin

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went at once to the livery-stable where his horses were kept, and, mounting, set out for the Hallam house. He had probably anticipated the war news, — “discounted” it, as the men of finance say, — and he wanted to lose no time before seeing Gabrielle. He had Pierre’s letter to deliver, and of course — At any rate he went at a gallop to the Hallam house.

After his custom, he entered without knocking, and passed through the parlor into the library. There he found Gabrielle sitting before the fire — for the evening was cool — holding a book in her hand, which she was not reading.

She rose quickly as he entered, and, seeing who it was, she started forward with a little look of eager gladness in her face. Instantly she checked the impulse. This was not the way in which she had planned to meet Hugh Marvin when he should return. She had carefully thought out her course of conduct for that occasion. She had planned the scene with great particularity as to details, and she had fully rehearsed it in her own mind, till she felt

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herself letter-perfect in her lines, as the player folk say. But as usual in such cases, the scene did not arrange itself in the way her imagination had created it. She had not expected Hugh to come in this way, in the evening and unheralded. She had not expected to be thus taken by surprise. Moreover, in her surprise, she had forgotten her part at the very beginning, and had, she felt, spoiled all by putting emotion into her look and manner.

In her effort to recover from that mistake, she assumed a hauteur which she had not intended, and thus additionally made a mess of her carefully constructed plans. It had been her purpose to combine dignity and reserve with a grateful recognition of the young man's many kindnesses to her, giving due proportion to each. In the event she had forgotten reserve at first and then had suddenly assumed too much of it. As a result she was about as uncomfortable a young woman as one often sees, and her consciousness that Hugh Marvin was an understanding witness of her discomfort was an additional source of embar-

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rassment. Having failed to give him the carefully planned greeting which she had intended, she gave him no greeting at all. Instead, she broke at once into an explanation for which Hugh had not asked.

"I'm alone, you see," she began. "There's a performance at the Atheneum to-night — some Swiss bell-ringers I believe — and Lida and Captain Will have gone to attend it. Naturally I didn't want to go. I suppose I ought to be glad of the war news, but it saddens me to think of — Anyhow I didn't feel like going, and now the children have gone to bed."

Hugh Marvin thought he understood the girl's embarrassment, in the which belief he was utterly mistaken. He did not know or dream that Gabrielle had learned the truth about his little transaction in cotton a year before. He attributed her present state of mind to a totally different cause.

"She has understood the suggestions I have given her," he rejoicingly thought, "and very naturally she is agitated and embarrassed now

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that I have come upon her so suddenly with nobody else present."

Instantly he acted upon this mistaken interpretation, doing so with that reckless impulsiveness that was always his master when strong emotion was dominant in his mind. Just as he had impulsively pitched Ezra Brass into the river, and just as he had hurled inkstands at John Land's head, so now he proceeded to bring matters to a crisis with Gabrielle. He threw his arms about her, drew her to him, and passionately kissed her.

"At last I am with you again, Gabrielle," he said, "and I have come to claim you as altogether my own. Say that you love me, Gabrielle!"

She did not say that or anything else for a time, but none the less Hugh Marvin had his answer. For she did not struggle for release from his grasp, and she let her head rest passively on his shoulder with her face close to his.

Half an hour later these two sat side by side in low-toned converse.

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"I didn't mean to let things happen this way, Hugh," said Gabrielle, blushing. "It is a terrible sacrifice of my pride and dignity, you know."

"No, I don't. I don't think I quite understand."

"Of course you don't. But you see I have a little quarrel to settle with you and a business matter to adjust. I ought to have cleared those things away, before — well, I ought to have settled them first."

"May I ask what the nature of these terrible affairs may happen to be?" he asked lightly.

"Don't jest, Hugh. They have been very serious to me."

Then she told him all that she had learned and all that she had suffered. When she told him of John Land's agency in the matter, he flushed with anger and was about to indulge his anger in speech. But restraining himself he said:—

"John Land has gone before a higher tribunal. He is dead now."

"But why did you do that, Hugh?—that about the cotton, you know."

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"The answer is easy enough. I did it because I loved you, Gabrielle, and there was no other way in which to provide for you."

"But you couldn't have loved me then. You had known me for only a few days."

"Just how long does it take for a man's love for a woman to grow, Gabrielle?"

"I don't know. How should I?"

"Neither do I. But I know now, and perhaps I knew it then, — that when I got out those cotton bales and made them yours, I did it because I loved you as I had never dreamed I could love any woman in the world."

There was silence for a time. Then Gabrielle asked timidly : —

"You will let me return what is left of the money, Hugh, won't you?"

"You can bring it to me as a marriage portion. You know French women always have their *dots* when they marry."

"Hugh, you are incorrigible. But I suppose I must submit, after — what has happened."

"Of course you must. What else can you do?"

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“Nothing. You are so strong and masterful. And after all it makes no difference.”

Then suddenly she lifted her head from his shoulder, and asked:—

“Did Pierre come with you?”

“No,” he answered. “What a ‘stupid’ I am, as Lida says; I brought you a letter from him, and I came up to-night expressly to deliver it.”

With that he produced the missive, and Gabrielle read it eagerly through.

“I’m glad you didn’t remember to deliver the letter before—I mean sooner.”

“So am I; but why?”

“Why, because it is nearly all about you, and if I had read it before—if I had read it first, you might have thought I was influenced by Pierre’s praises of you, and by something he says just at the end of the letter.”

“May I know what it is?”

In answer she handed the letter to him, with her finger upon the passage referred to. In it Pierre had written:—

“Hugh Marvin is the only man I have ever

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seen to whom I should be rejoiced to see you married."

At this moment the Hallams returned, and the rest of the evening was occupied with greetings and exchanges of personal news of one kind and another.

After Hugh had gone, — Captain Hallam going with him, — Gabrielle made some excuse for asking Mrs. Hallam to her room.

"I've something to tell you, Lida," she said after the door was closed.

"Of course you have," answered that sagacious lady.

"But how did you know it, Lida?"

"What do I keep a pair of eyes for? I read it in your face, and still more plainly in Hugh's. Besides, I expected it."

But she did not explain.

XXXIX

FRONT FACE

“SO Pierre cannot come to see me?” asked Gabrielle, as she and Hugh rode together along the levee road the next morning.

“Not yet. But it will not be long now. Lee simply cannot make the retreat he is desperately trying to make. He must surrender within a week at most — and news of it may come at any hour.”

“Will that end the war?”

“Yes, — practically it will. There are other scattering Confederate forces in various parts of the South, but they will surrender as soon as their commanders learn that Lee has done so, and then there will be nothing left of the war.”

“What will happen then, as you foresee it?”

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"The Southern soldiers will go back to their homes and go to work. Those of them who are prisoners will be discharged. In all probability there will be a general amnesty proclaimed, indeed such an amnesty is already in force so far as the great mass of the Southerners is concerned. As soon as the Southern forces surrender and disband, Mr. Lincoln's proclamation, issued early last winter in anticipation of the end, will become applicable. Pierre will be as free then to go where he pleases as I am."

"Might I go to New Orleans and see him in the meantime?"

"No. I thought of that, and I am now loading the steamboat that brought me up the river. I decided upon that partly for the purpose of detaining her long enough to let you go South on a visit. But after thinking the matter over, I have decided otherwise. Now that the final breakup has come there may be disturbances, leading to harsh military measures. I don't want you to be exposed to danger or inconvenience."

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She put out her hand in answer, and he pressed it warmly.

“Won’t it be a loss to you to send this steamboat-load of freight down the river just now?”

“No. On the contrary, I think it thoroughly good business. You see it is April now, and there is still time for the Southerners returning to their plantations to plant a cotton crop. They will need supplies much faster than supplies can be sent to New Orleans, and I look for a sudden and great advance in the prices of Western produce there. So does everybody else, and if I hadn’t secured the tonnage of this steamboat, Will Hallam and Napper Tandry would have been scrambling for the chance to load her.”

“But how are the poor Southerners to buy supplies? What have they to pay with?”

“Oh, that will be easily arranged. Those of them who own plantations will agree with merchants in New Orleans, giving them a lien on the cotton they are to raise, and in return the merchants will advance them all the supplies they need. There will be many strong, new

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business houses opened in New Orleans for that express purpose, and they will have plenty of capital. You see capital is always in a hurry to go where it can be employed at a profit, and in this case the profit is both large and certain. That reminds me of a plan I've been turning over in my mind. I think, if Pierre is willing to join me, we'll open a New Orleans house ourselves. We'll make our style, 'Marvin, Latour & Co.,' in Cairo, and 'Latour, Marvin & Co.,' in New Orleans."

"But where is Pierre to get the money to put into the firm?"

"The name 'Latour' is a capital in itself in New Orleans," Hugh answered. "The old clients of your father and grandfather will come to a firm of which he is the head. Will Hallam will be the 'Co.' in both firms, and we shall have the backing of his bank. I spoke to him about it last night. Indeed, he and I sat up nearly all night in my office planning it."

"Do you think Pierre will get back the plantation and the New Orleans place?"

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"I am sure of it. There never has been any serious suggestion made, looking to the general confiscation of the property of Southerners, and I think no such suggestion would command serious attention now. Indeed, it would be suicidal for the country to attempt such a thing. It would impoverish the whole South and throw upon the country the necessity of feeding many millions of people. No, it is certain that nothing of that kind will be done. The desire of the government is that the Southern soldiers shall go home, go to work, and build up their prosperity as soon as possible. The growing of a cotton crop down South this year is as vitally necessary to the North as to the South. For the rest, what the great body of the people here want, so far as the South is concerned, is peace and a brisk trade, profitable on both sides."

"Thank you," she said. Then she lapsed into silence and pushed Hotfoot into a gallop. When she drew rein at last, she turned her face full upon her companion and said :—

"Hugh, I should like it to be in my own home in New Orleans."

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She did not explain what she meant by "it," but Hugh understood.

"I'll write to Pierre," he said in reply, "and ask him to get possession as soon as he is free, and to put the place in order between now and June. You shall go down the river in May. I'll ask Lida to go with you. Will and I will join you there in June. And Pierre shall be best man."

♦

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